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ABSTRACT

This followup study traced the progress of one program assisting Jewish Ethiopian immigrants to Israel and their children, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten (PCK) in Beer-Sheva, and examined its impact 10 years after program participation. The PCK was a daily program for young children run by paraprofessional counselors, all women from the Ethiopian community, with mothers attending on a rotational basis. Two groups of former participants were identified, along with two groups of children of Ethiopian origin of similar age from the same neighborhoods who had not participated and one group of children of the same age who were not of Ethiopian origin. Data collection methods included interviews of children and their parents, and teacher ratings of children's scholastic and social abilities, achievement, and parent-school relationships. The main areas in which differences were found between PCK children and the comparison groups were in the organization of their activities and thinking, their activeness and initiative-taking, their perception of studies and school, the importance of home and family, their sense of belonging to the Ethiopian community, their ability to express emotion, and the nature of their social interactions. A majority of PCK children were rated by their teachers as having high scholastic ability, moderate to high scholastic achievement, and moderate to very high verbal skills. However, compared to the comparison group, a majority of the same children were perceived as not showing an interest or investing any effort in their studies, as not fully using their ability, and as not being interested in getting help or getting ahead. Mothers who participated in the kindergarten gained insights into the Israeli education system and its approach to organization and schedules, and learned different methods of disciplining their children. It was concluded that participation in the kindergarten had a long-term effect on the lives of both children and parents. (Contains 31 references.) (KB)

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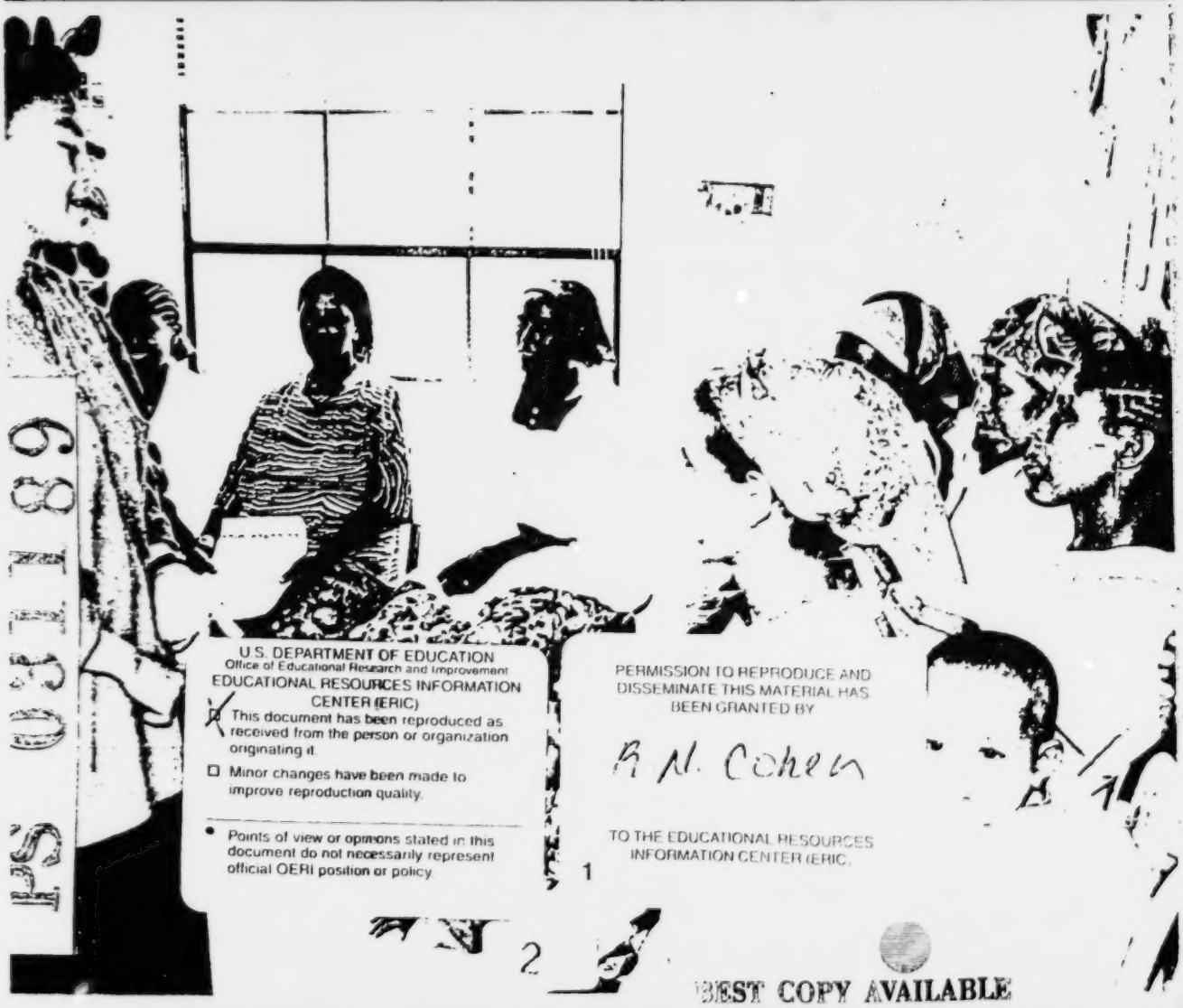
Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections

A sense of belonging

A tracer study of ALMAYA's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, Israel

Miri Levin-Rozalis and Naama Shafran



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The objective is to develop children's innate potential to the greatest extent possible. We concentrate on children 0-8 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

We accomplish our mission through two interconnected strategies:

a grant-making programme in 40 countries aimed at developing contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development; and

the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958. Bernard van Leer was founder of the Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer.

Levin-Rozalis, Miri and Naama Shafran

A sense of belonging: A tracer study of ALMAYA's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, Israel

Miri Levin-Rozalis and Naama Shafran

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Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections

Following Footsteps

A sense of belonging

A tracer study of ALMAYA's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, Israel

Miri Levin-Rozalis and Naama Shafran

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March 2003

Following Footsteps
reports of studies tracing the 'footsteps' of former participants in early childhood programmes

Bernard van Leer Foundation

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About Following Footsteps

Following Footsteps are reports of efforts to trace former participants of early childhood projects and programmes. They are studies that follow the progress of the children, their families, the workers, the communities or the organisations five or more years down the line to find out how they are faring. Some of the programmes were originally supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation; others were not. Some of the studies were commissioned by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, while others were not. Each of the programmes studied is unique, and the methods used for tracing, gathering data and analysing are many and varied. As a whole, the studies will contribute to our understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

About the series

Following Footsteps is a sub-series of *Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections*. The series as a whole addresses issues of importance to practitioners, policy makers and academics concerned with meeting the educational and developmental needs of disadvantaged children in developing and industrial societies. Contributions to this series are welcomed. They can be drawn from theory or practice, and can be a maximum of 30,000 words. Information about contributing to the series can be obtained from Diane Lemieux, Series Editor, Department of Programme Documentation and Communication at the address given on the back cover.

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About the authors

Dr Miri Levin-Rozalis describes herself as 'a sociologist of Israeli society'. She is a faculty member of the Department of Education, Ben-Gurion University in Beer-Sheva and has been working with the Ethiopian community in Israel since the first major wave of migration to Israel in 1984. She is chairperson of the Israeli Association for Programme Evaluation.

Naama Shafran is a student in the MA programme in the Department of Clinical Psychology, Bar-Ilan University, having received her BA degree in psychology and Talmud from Bar-Ilan University in 2001.

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Foreword

Until the 1980s, the Jewish communities of Ethiopia had been almost isolated from Jews elsewhere for some 2,000 years. Like their rural Christian neighbours, their economy was based on subsistence agriculture, while the services available to them were few and far between. From the late 1970s, tens of thousands of them found their way to Israel – their 'Promised Land' – suffering many privations on the way. And once in Israel, they found that they were expected to adjust to a society and way of life that was entirely different from anything that they had previously experienced.

Culture shock existed for the new arrivals as well as the receiving society. While there were numerous attempts to assist the newcomers in adjusting to their new homeland, there were misunderstandings on all sides. Many of the new citizens found themselves in the town of Beer-Sheva, and this report traces the progress of one of the programmes that was established to work specifically with young children and parents from the community.

As a general rule, children are able to adjust to new conditions far more easily than adults do. They learn a new language more quickly; by mixing with peers, they pick up behavioural norms; and by participating in educational settings, they see and learn how organisations work – opportunities that their parents do not always have. At the same time, the influence of the home is at least as important for children as the influence of school and the street. Based on the fact that parents are key in terms of children's socialisation, and the fact that the children needed to be introduced to the education system in Israel, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten was established, a facility that toddlers attended daily, to which parents (almost only mothers) came on a rota basis.

The objective of the study reported on in this publication was to find out whether the positive influence of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, which appeared to be obvious at the time children were enrolled in the programme and immediately after, was still evident 10 years later. The results are quite striking. Despite small sample sizes and the difficulties of interviewing members of this community (who have been 'over-researched' for many years), there can be no doubt that participation in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten had a profound influence on the lives of the 36 children who were traced. This finding is based on interviews with the children themselves, their parents, and their teachers, and it is further supported by comparison with children of similar ages from the same communities who did not participate in such a programme.

One of the objectives of the programme was to prepare children to participate in Israeli culture and education on an equal footing with other Israeli children. In short, what

Working with puzzles, photo: ALMAYA

the study tells us is that the children who were in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten have very definitely moved towards the norm in terms of behaviour and performance for children of the same age in Israel. The differences between the programme and the comparison groups are manifest in such areas as their ability to organise themselves and their activities, showing initiative, expressing emotions and their attitudes towards school, learning and their own community.

Israel is one of the countries of the world where people from many different cultures and backgrounds are living their lives in a shared system. For new arrivals especially, this can mean a whole new way of life and the need to adapt to different norms and values. In such circumstances it is often the children who are torn between competing, and even conflicting, values. In view of the major differences between what they found in their new homes and what they had left behind, this is particularly the case for the families of Ethiopian origin. The older generations have lost their close communities, as well as their traditional livelihoods. The younger generations have their own preoccupations – how to be part of this very different society while still retaining the distinct identity that has been handed down over many centuries.

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It seems that the experience of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten has helped to give participating children a range of tools that are helping them to fit better into Israeli society, while at the same time, preserving their connection with their community, which they see as a support. The children in this study have a distinct sense of self and can be said to have shifted along the axis from community towards individualism. This has made them more individualistic than their peers in the comparison group, while they remain less individualistic than their Israeli peers who are not of Ethiopian origin.

The mothers who participated in the Kindergarten on a rota basis gained insights into the Israeli education system and its approach to organisation and schedules; they learned different methods of disciplining their children; they saw that children may make individual choices without disrupting the entire group. This appears to have positively affected the adjustment of whole families to their new society.

Overall, we can say that children and parents who were part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten are not just living within Israeli society, they have a real sense of belonging to it.

The tracer studies

The early childhood interventions supported by the Foundation are action projects that are implemented by locally based partners in 'the field'. Their objectives are concerned with developing and improving the lives of children and their families and communities in the here and now, based on the hypothesis that this will lay the foundation for improved opportunities in the future. These projects have not been conceived or implemented as research studies in which children/families have been randomly assigned to 'treatment' or 'control' groups, and they have not usually been subjected to tests or other research instruments.

Evidence exists on the longer-term effects of early childhood interventions, much of it coming from longitudinal studies that have been implemented as research projects in industrialised countries. The outcomes are mixed, although usually fairly positive. Other evidence, mostly anecdotal, is available from early childhood projects such as those supported by the Foundation, and again, this is mostly positive.

After more than 30 years of support for field projects, the Foundation decided in 1998 to commission a number of studies that would trace former participants of projects to find out how they were faring a minimum of five years after they had left the programme. Although evaluation has been a major element in early childhood programmes supported by the Foundation, we have never, until now, gone back to find out how people are doing a number of years later.

Other similar studies are taking place, or have been completed, in countries as widely spread as Jamaica and Kenya, Ireland, the USA, Botswana, Colombia, Trinidad and Honduras. Each of the programmes studied is different in its target group, in its context, and in its strategies. This means that the methods used to trace former participants and discover their current status are almost as varied as the original programmes. In the studies that we have commissioned, we are emphasising an anthropological and qualitative approach that uses small samples of former participants, matching them, where possible, with individuals/families that share similar characteristics for the purpose of comparison.

This present study took a wholly qualitative approach. Specifically, the data from the young respondents were based entirely on their responses to three open questions,

while interviews with parents and teachers covered topics rather than using a questionnaire. Using the process of abduction ('a hypothesis on probation'), the findings raised questions that have been examined in the light of further observation and findings. The authors have also given us a glimpse into the processes they used to analyse the data.

Our intention is to share the results of the individual studies with as wide an audience as possible, as well as to undertake an analysis of a group of the studies to see what lessons can be learned in terms of both outcomes and methods.

We anticipate that each study report will be a source of learning and reflection in its own context and country as well as for a wider public. As a whole, we hope that these exercises in following footsteps will contribute to a better understanding of the effects, and effectiveness, of early childhood programmes.

Ruth N Cohen
Bernard van Leer Foundation

Acknowledgements

There are only two names on the cover, but there are many more people without whom this research would never have happened. The first one is the initiator and the life behind this research series: Ruth Cohen from the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Ruth was the drive that pushed me and gave the framework and the opportunity to research a question that is always there in my work as a programme evaluator: 'What are the lasting effects of this programme?' When she came with the suggestion to conduct a tracer study on a programme that I had evaluated for several years, I was thrilled but also frightened. It was quite a challenge, a challenge that I hope I have managed to handle, though not without difficulties. In that journey, Ruth has always been very supportive, very understanding and for all that I say: thank you.

The second person whose help to realise this research has been significant is my co-researcher Naama Shafran. Her dedication, seriousness, concern and, of course, wonderful work have made this journey worthwhile.

Our research aides – Rinat Sadeh, Shira Ainhorn, Adi Stunis, Dganit Balmas, Zehavit Avraham – all made an important contribution, every one of them added her own flavour to the dish.

When we met with our child interviewees and told them that their details are confidential, they asked to be mentioned in the research. 'We agreed to be interviewed,' they said, 'so we don't want you to hide us. We want to be presented'. It is too long a list to include here (76 children) but I want to thank them all. Especially I want to thank them for their unique reaction that challenged and changed my perception that took for granted that we have to hide the individuals who are researched. From now on I will not only ask my research population for their consent, but I will also ask whether or not they want their identities protected. Some of them may want to be recognised. When we talk about participatory research and evaluation, this is a point of view to be considered.

I also want to say thank you to the people at ALMAYA who were very helpful in everything we needed, especially the former manager Nomi Arbel, the initiator of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten Esther Abitbul, and the group of counsellors.

And last but not least, I want to thank the editor, Kathleen Sheridan, who made this research readable.

Thank you all,

Miri Levin-Rozalis, November 2002

Executive summary

Approximately 90,000 Jews of Ethiopian origin live in Israel. The majority of them arrived between 1977 and 1994 in several waves of migration, having suffered through terrible conditions. The new immigrants were in shock from their journey, but also from Israel – an industrialised country completely different from the agricultural, subsistence life style from which they had come. Less than one percent of the immigrants were well educated and many intervention programmes were established to help them function within the host society and to avoid a situation in which they would become marginal.

Many of the new migrants settled in Beer-Sheva where ALMAYA was established in 1985 to provide a series of programmes for young children, their families and the community. One of these was the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, a daily programme for young children run by paraprofessional counsellors, all women from the Ethiopian community, with parents (mothers) attending on a rotational basis.

Kindergarten is a concept that does not exist in Ethiopia, thus it was necessary to familiarise both the children and their parents with its structure, content, and accepted work methods. Basic objectives were to provide the tools to aid successful integration into Israeli society; to introduce mothers to the kindergarten environment; to provide the children with the concepts, behaviour, and thinking accepted within the education system in Israel.

Work with parents included the use of assertive educational methods rather than physical ones; for example, how to provide a framework and boundaries for the behaviour of their children without physical punishment and restrictive discipline. By providing plenty of choice in every activity, the idea was conveyed to both parents and children that each child is an individual and an independent entity. Children and parents were also encouraged to pay attention to their emotions, name them, learn to deal with them, and control them.

This study traced 36 former participants to examine whether the influence of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten on participating children and parents would still be evident 10 years later. These children were from the two neighbourhoods where the programme was implemented (Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel) and formed two of the groups of child respondents. Another two groups were children of Ethiopian origin of

similar age from the same two neighbourhoods who had not participated, forming the comparison groups. A fifth group of 25 children of the same age who were not of Ethiopian origin was also included (the Arad group). As many parents as possible were interviewed, although only a minority agreed to participate. The children's teachers were asked about their pupils' scholastic and social abilities and achievements, as well as parent/teacher/school relationships.

The children were interviewed with three open-ended questions in order to let them express themselves in their own words and, where necessary, they were encouraged to elaborate their responses with follow-up questions.

The main areas in which differences were found between Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and the comparison groups were:

- in the organisation of their activities and thinking;
- in their activeness and initiative-taking;
- in their perception of studies and school;
- in the importance of home and family;
- in their sense of belonging to the Ethiopian community;
- in their ability to express emotion; and
- in the nature of their social interactions.

Some of the differences between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups and the comparison groups were found in both neighbourhoods, and some were found in one neighbourhood only. But because the group from Gimmel was so small, it was difficult to draw definite conclusions based on those interviews alone.

There was an apparent conflict between the academic performance of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and their teachers' perception of their motivation. A majority of these children were graded by their teachers as having high scholastic ability, moderate to high scholastic achievement and moderate to very high verbal

abilities. However, compared to the comparison group, a majority of the same children were also perceived as not showing an interest or investing any effort in their studies, as not using their abilities to the full, and as not being interested in getting help or getting ahead. It may be that the teachers expected more from these children and were disappointed when they did not meet their full potential.

It is evident from the information collected in the study that the children who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten were different from other children of Ethiopian origin of their age. Participation in this Kindergarten, therefore, can be said to have a long-term effect on the lives of both children and parents. There are clear differences between children who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and those in the same neighbourhood and from the same background who did not. This tracer study shows that these differences run through parents' and teachers' perceptions of the children, as well as the children's perceptions of themselves and their place in the community, their scholastic performance, and their attitude towards family and school.

Introduction

The Beta Israel - the Ethiopian Jewish Community

The migration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel was traumatic. Only a trickle of Ethiopian Jews had made it to Israel on their own before 1977. During the seven years between 1977 and 1984, about 6,000 arrived by air and sea through clandestine operations, and in 1984, a massive wave – the first of many – of about 10,000 set out on foot to cross the hundreds of miles of desert between Ethiopia and Sudan. Two out of every five perished in the burning desert sands or at the hands of robbers and bandits. In Sudan they waited as refugees for months, sometimes years, suffering from hunger and epidemics, and hiding their religion. In November 1984, the Israeli government brought 6,300 of these refugees from Sudan to Israel in a large-scale clandestine operation code-named 'Operation Moses'. In 1991, 'Operation Solomon' brought most of the rest to Israel. Now (mid-2002) there are approximately 90,000 Jews of Ethiopian origin in Israel and immigrants are still arriving.

In Ethiopia, the Jewish community (which referred to itself as the *Beta Israel* [1]) existed as a minority in a region populated by a Christian majority. Spread throughout hundreds of highland villages in the north-western regions of Gondar, Wolkait and Tigray, they differed from region to region in their languages, dialects, clothing and customs. But despite these differences, they were closely interconnected, sharing the same lifestyle and essentially sharing a culture with the Christian population (Pankhurst 1995).

The Beta Israel economy was based on subsistence agriculture, and the community in Ethiopia worked in specific crafts, like as blacksmiths and pottery makers. The men were responsible for farming and relations with the non-Jewish communities (Herman 1996; Kaplan 1992, 1995). Those who came from Addis Ababa and were well educated made up less then one percent of the population. Only a few had any knowledge of reading and writing in any language (mostly Amharic), while the vast majority of the adult population was completely illiterate (in any language).

Ethiopian-Jewish culture is based on a tribal model where everyone knows everyone personally, and where all tribal decisions are reached by consulting the elders or religious leaders whose word is law. Rights in the community are based

1 The term *Beta Israel* means *House of Israel* and is the name that was used by the Jewish community itself when in Ethiopia. The word *beta* is, in fact, a Gez word – the language used by Jewish priests in Ethiopia, which probably has its roots in Aramaic.

Mother and child. photo: ALMAYA

on social stature – the older, richer or more socially influential one is, the more rights one has. Assistance is given to the needy on the basis of their personal needs.

The Jewish community in Ethiopia seems to have been a society characterised by stable social and cultural structures, with little division of labour or specialisation, and a very low level of urbanisation. The dominant interrelationships were primary relationships, generally face to face. Social relations were stable and lifelong within a known community – usually the large, extended patriarchal family that made up the Beta Israel in the village.

In Israel, the Jews from Ethiopia arrived to a reality that was very different from their own – and from their dreams. Many of them had not seen white people before arriving in Israel, and most of them did not expect the Israeli Jews to have a skin colour different from their own. Israel is not the biblical Holy Land they expected. People there do not wear long, flowing white garments. There is no steady flow of milk and honey. And Jerusalem is just another Western city. The new immigrants from Ethiopia were in shock from the hardship and suffering of their journey, from the deaths of family members and companions, and from arrival at destination Israel – a Western country that was so different from what they knew or expected. Thus, the difficulties the immigrants from Ethiopia faced in becoming part of the host Israeli society were far greater than they were for newcomers from Europe, Asia, North and South America, and North Africa. By the same token, knowledge in Israel about Ethiopian Jews, their habits, language, and way of life was almost non-existent.

The Jews from Ethiopia have maintained their strong communal identity and live in Israel in close communities in two areas, in the north and in the south of the country, a situation that reinforces their separate identity. For example, while only two percent of the total number of pupils in Israel are of Ethiopian origin, there are schools where they account for 80 percent of the pupils (Rosen 1985; Weil 1995a, 1995b; see also the bibliography for other publications on Ethiopian Jewry).

The Ethiopian newcomers and the host Israeli society

This massive migration from Ethiopia to Israel has offered us a unique opportunity for cross-cultural work within two populations that are very different from one another. It must be noted at the outset that we are discussing one of the few cases in the world (if not the only one) in which an entire community of Africans of a tribal culture, moved – as a community and not as individuals – into a modern Western society, and where both cultures wanted the newcomers to be accepted as equal members of that society.

There are very large differences between the mainstream culture in Israel and the culture of the Ethiopian-Jewish community that mainly affecting areas of social organisation. The host Israeli society is characterised by urbanisation, a complex division of labour, a high literacy rate, mass social processes, the prominence of secondary task-specific relationships and the dominance of individual achievement and achieved status (Eisenstadt 1966; Ben-Porat 1993). The Ethiopian-Jewish society is characterised by a low level of urbanisation, unity of social roles, diffuse primary relationships and ascribed status in Ethiopian society. Social and cultural communication in Israel is mainly through mass media, such as written publications, radio, television, and the Internet rather than interpersonal face-to-face interactions (Katz and Gurevitch 1976). In Israel, the emphasis is on industrial and technological occupations; even food production is highly mechanised and computer-run, rather than based on traditional manual labour and household agriculture. The power of the bureaucracy has increased enormously (Anteby 1995b; Ben-Porat 1993; Herman 1996; Rosen 1987). Social differentiation is on the rise, and traditional and national identification is decreasing. These differences are summarised in Table 1 (see also Bodovski 1996; Flum 1998; Weill 1995b).

TABLE 1: DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL STRUCTURE BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS

The social dimension	The host Israeli society	The Ethiopian immigrants
Structure and social organisation	Modern industrial society: bureaucratic, specialised, universal standards, universal criteria, secondary relationships	Traditional agricultural society: rural community, structurally amorphous, primary relationships, particularist criteria
Organisation of work	Division of labour, multiple roles in society, multiple functions and status of the individual	Unity of functions, mostly agricultural, few roles and functions in society
Groups	Involvement and participation in varied and multiple groups, primary and secondary relations according to different roles	Units are the extended family, the village, and the group of friends, who make up a holistic lifestyle; grouping for a specific task is rare
Social roles	Multiplicity of social roles for the individual	One social role with many tasks for the individual
Dominant mode of relationships	Specific role relationships, performance-oriented	Diffuse relationships, attitude to the whole person
Status	Dominance of achieved status	Dominance of ascribed status
Communication	Complex mass communication, written and verbal, impersonal	Interpersonal face-to-face verbal communication, gesturing, unwritten, not cross-status

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The arrival of the Ethiopian community in Israel required enormous interventions in order to help the members of the community function within the host society and to avoid a situation in which the newcomers would become marginalised.

Projects

For the past 10 years, one of the authors (Miri Levin-Rozalis) has headed the evaluation teams of four nationwide projects for the Jews of Ethiopian origin in Israel. Aimed at many groups in the population (pupils, infants and parents, adults, community leaders, women, and so on), the projects have covered more then 30 localities in Israel, often with more than one project in an area. The total primary target population of these projects has been more than 3,000 people, about four percent of the population of immigrants from Ethiopia. Because many of these programmes have been directed at families, the number of people who have been affected comes to more than 10,000.

Despite the programme successes, we noticed that the same difficulties emerged repeatedly, no matter what kind of intervention took place or what segment of the population was being addressed. It became apparent that although we all spoke Hebrew, we were not speaking the same language; although we said the same words, we did not mean the same things. From the beginning, the concepts of time, roles, organisation, and authority caused the most misunderstanding. It was clear that something much deeper, wider, and stronger than the dictionary meaning of the words was the cause. The most common problems were the following (Levin-Rozalis and Schneider 1997; Levin-Rozalis 2000a):

- *Recruitment and dropout:* There was tremendous difficulty recruiting participants for activities, and the dropout rates among those who were recruited were very high.

- *Initiative:* There was a lack of initiative among both the para-professionals of Ethiopian origin and the clients, even in very simple tasks such as collecting a key to open a club.

- *Punctuality:* There were problems with arriving on time and remaining until the end of activities.

- *Planning difficulties:* Many of the professionals and paraprofessionals of Ethiopian origin found long-term planning difficult.

- *Authority:* This problem had two aspects: first, within the Ethiopian-Jewish community counsellors of Ethiopian origin encountered difficulties training other people of Ethiopian origin. At the same time,

people in the community found it difficult to accept their peers as authoritative counsellors. Second, workers of Ethiopian origin found simple requests, such as reporting on work hours, insulting and evidence of mistrust.

- *Mother-child interactions:* Among the Ethiopian immigrants, it is not culturally acceptable for mothers to talk to their babies and toddlers or to play with them. This made it difficult to convince the mothers to do this in the mother-child or family programmes.

- *Slow pace of change:* There was considerable frustration on both sides (clients and participants) with the slow pace of change relative to the intensive investment.

The programmes operated by ALMAYA were designed to address these problems.

ALMAYA – the Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel

Established in Beer-Sheva in 1985 as the Community and Education Project for Beta Israel, with support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, ALMAYA is a non-profit association that provides Ethiopian immigrants with a series of programmes for young children, their families, and the community. The programmes lean on the cultural origins of the children and use the know-how and resources available in the Beta Israel community to prepare the children, families, and the community itself for life in Israel. Many of ALMAYA's programmes are reactive – designed to address problems identified within the Ethiopian population, such as those listed above. One of the programmes provided by ALMAYA is the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten.

Early childhood programmes

ALMAYA's preschool programmes are based on the accepted professional perception that a child's cognitive-cultural development, including acquisition of basic cultural concepts (such as language or forms of behaviour) occurs during the preschool years (from birth to six years of age). A child's development and upbringing are culture-dependent and vary from one culture to another, with the immediate natural environment – home and family – playing a central role in this development as well as in the acquisition of basic cultural concepts. The more the child's needs are recognised and understood in this environment (primarily by the parents) and the more steps are taken to enrich the child, the greater the probability of the child's positive development.

In a situation where two cultures meet and where one must adapt in order to function within the other, it is both erroneous and detrimental to reject the old culture when learning the new one. The validity of the culture of origin should be developed and preserved, while being *supplemented* by the new content required for functioning within the host culture. The best agents for bridging the gap between the two cultures are members of the community itself – people who are familiar with the culture of origin and its unique codes, what is accepted and what is not, what can be done and what should not.

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten programme is based on three elements: parents, children and the paraprofessional counsellors.

The Home Visiting Programme

The counsellors – who also operate the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten – receive training as preschool teachers together and rotate places every few years. They play a significant role in the programme. They are all women of Ethiopian origin, who in the beginning had no professional or other training. Some started working before they had any knowledge of the Hebrew language, and the vast majority of them did not read or write in any language. None had any knowledge of child-rearing practices in Western society.

The counsellors have various roles. In the Home Visiting Programme, the counsellors visit the houses of the families in the programme. Each counsellor is responsible for about 10 families that have children between birth and three years of age. She visits each family once a week for a period of an hour to an hour and a half, serving as a kind of mentor, teaching members of the family (usually the mother, sometimes the father, grandmother, or sister) everything concerning childrearing. Information about nutrition is an important part of this, but so is playing with and talking to the child. As mentioned above, in the Ethiopian culture of origin, it is not acceptable to talk to babies and young children or to play with them (one doesn't talk to a child until he/she can speak and even then, it is only to give instructions). In addition, the counsellor follows the development of the child, checking to make sure the mother has taken the child to the clinic for vaccinations and development checks. She helps the mother with everyday problems, tells her how to call the social services if necessary, will accompany her to the social security office, and so on.

The counsellors receive in-service training and are closely supervised – both individually and as a group. As part of the individual supervision, the counsellor discusses the situation of every family and child for whom she is responsible with the supervisor.

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten

The kindergarten is a concept that does not exist in Ethiopia, and most of the content it conveys (knowledge acquisition and forms of behaviour) is unfamiliar to the Beta Israel community. Hence, it is necessary to familiarise both the children and their parents with this concept: its structure, content, and accepted work methods. The parents' reaction at home to what goes on in the kindergarten plays a significant role in the child's functioning in the kindergarten: the information the child brings home from the kindergarten can be accepted and encouraged, or rejected. Familiarising parents with the new concepts is essential to their involvement in their child's experiences, and can lead to parents nurturing these new notions and contributing to them.

Designed for children aged 18 months to four years, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten works like a nursery school. The objective of the programme is to provide the population of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel with tools to aid their successful integration into Israeli society. This is done through the following.

- **For the children:** encouraging the child's normal development and enrichment, while emphasising cognitive and emotional tools (among other things) to aid their integration into the education system, in particular, and the host society in general.

- **For the parents:**
  1. providing parents with the tools to become their children's primary educators in the host culture;
  2. developing the parents' sense of responsibility for their children's education;
  3. enriching the mothers by expanding their knowledge and by exposing them to different educational frameworks and joint activities with their children;
  4. enhancing the mothers' self-image and sense of competence by validating their culture of origin through its integration in the instructional programmes (which also subsequently increases the children's self-image).

- **Operational objectives:**
  1. to introduce the children to the kindergarten environment and ease their integration into kindergarten in the future;
  2. to introduce mothers to the kindergarten environment;
  3. to introduce mothers and children to accepted content within the education system in Israel;

4. to provide the children with the concepts, behaviour, and thinking accepted within the education system in Israel;

5. to provide the children with support and emotional reinforcement to help them cope within the education system in Israel;

6. to familiarise the children with their Ethiopian heritage;

7. to reinforce the parents' sense of the validity of their Ethiopian heritage;

8. to provide the children with one nutritious meal a day;

9. to introduce mothers to nutritious, inexpensive and easy-to-prepare foods.

In addition, several unique components were incorporated into the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten programme in response to the needs of the population.

- **Behaviour:** The parents expressed grave concerns about the children's behaviour and asked the kindergarten teachers to enforce strict discipline through corporal punishment. A great deal of work was carried out with the parents on the use of assertive educational methods rather than physical ones, on how to provide a framework and boundaries for behaviour without physical punishment and restrictive discipline. The work was carried out through a process of modelling and by providing explanations and examples.

  When parents reacted with anger to their children getting dirty, the importance of play was explained to them, and they were advised to send the children to the kindergarten in simple clothing that could get dirty. When the parents expressed fear of scissors, they were shown how to work with scissors and the beautiful things their children were producing. Everything had to be learned from scratch.

- **Familiarisation with the Western concept of time:** Daily routines and attitudes toward time among Ethiopian immigrants are very different from those of the host Israeli society. Great emphasis was placed in the kindergarten on understanding Western concepts of time and place. Every activity had a clearly defined beginning and end: no activity began before the previous one had ended. The daily routine at the kindergarten was consistent and organised, and was clearly understood by everyone: kindergarten teachers, parents, and children.

- **Developing an independent entity:** Among Ethiopian immigrants, children occupy the lowest status. They grow up alongside adults but are closed off in a world of their own. Efforts were made in the kindergarten to convey to both parents and children the idea that each child is an individual, that each child is an independent entity. This was achieved by providing plenty of choice in every sphere – in meals, activities, games and toys – all within a clear and structured framework, because without structure, choice is meaningless.

- **Attention to the children's needs:** The entire process of channelling and processing emotions is problematic among Ethiopian immigrants. On the one hand, there is great internalisation of emotions (and of physical pain), and on the other hand, when emotional outbursts do occur, they are very hard to control. At the kindergarten, children and parents were taught to pay attention to their emotions, name them, learn to deal with them, and control them. Parents and children learned what it means to be sad and why, what it means to be angry and why, and how anger or sadness can be dealt with:

  Are you sad because mummy hasn't arrived yet? Let's play something interesting to make the time pass more quickly.

  Are you angry because the toy is broken? Let's see if we can fix it, and if not, we can look for another toy.

Parents learned to ask their children what they did in kindergarten, and the children learned to tell. They were asked, *What did you tell your parents yesterday?* The experience became a joint one.

All this had to be taught to the paraprofessional counsellors, too, and these very same issues are still being addressed today. They are still not self-evident, and it is not always easy for the counsellors.

Description of the programme [2]

The kindergarten operates according to a structured schedule, which the counsellors adjust depending on the weather or other factors, such as activities inside the kindergarten or in the yard. The children attend every day. One of their parents (usually a mother) is supposed to spend the day at the kindergarten in rotation with other parents. The educational activity is essentially the same as it is in regular kindergartens, with the parent on the duty roster for the day joining the counsellors. However, the children at the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten are also provided with a nutritious meal that is different from the meals they eat at home. The intention is that the parent who is there that day will also learn about nutrition and the

2 The text in this section was taken from the programme evaluation done in 1977 (Degani-Zemel et al. 1997).

preparation of foods common in Israel. A party, as well as a workshop for the children and their parents, is held at the kindergarten on every religious holiday. At the end of the year, the children either go on an annual field trip or have some other form of special activity.

The counsellors are attentive to the children's needs and abilities and provide the children with the warmth, personal attention and encouragement that promote development. They endeavour to find ways to help children who are encountering difficulties and to encourage shy or passive children to participate in the activities. This is done calmly but persistently. The counsellors organise activities for the older children to provide assistance to the younger ones, during meal times for example.

The participating parents attend the instruction sessions, and it is clear that a change has occurred in their perception of their own role and that of the counsellors. They understand that they themselves play an integral role in the work, and as a result of waiting for the counsellor at the designated time,

Fathers learning about preschool, photo: ALMAYA

attending instruction sessions, and observing the activities, they no longer perceive the counsellors as mere babysitters.

The counsellors are paraprofessionals who require regular instruction, which is provided through in-service guidance and training programmes. The kindergarten coordinator, who is an expert on both preschoolaged children and intercultural work, supervises the counsellors both administratively and professionally.

The coordinator provides guidance to counsellors in two ways:

In-service training: the coordinator visits the kindergarten to provide the paraprofessional workers with regular guidance and demonstrates activities in 'real-time'. This guidance is conveyed through modelling in accordance with ALMAYA's professional concepts.

Biweekly training: every two weeks the counsellors have a three-hour training session. These training sessions are held at ALMAYA's pedagogic centre in the early afternoon and are usually organised by the coordinator together with the centre's staff. The training sessions deal with the kindergarten's educational programme in general (subjects such as religious festivals or the four seasons), specific subjects unfamiliar to the community (such as birthday parties), and difficulties (such as involving the duty-roster parents in the activities). A small part of the sessions is devoted to instruction, with the greater part addressing the counsellors' experiences. The counsellors prepare materials and present events, which are analysed by the group and the coordinator. In the process, the coordinator expands the possible scope of reactions and discusses the desired reactions. This process of the counsellors' enrichment and reinforcement has continued uninterrupted over the years.

Follow-up study of programme graduates

A follow-up study of children aged four to five years who graduated from ALMAYA's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and Home Visiting Programme in Beer-Sheva was conducted in 1999 to examine how well the children fit into mainstream kindergartens (Bar-Nadav, Levin-Rozalis, and Rodoy 1999). The researchers looked at integration in several areas, including cognitive ability and functioning in the kindergarten. The parenting skills of the children's parents were also examined. The children's integration was assessed on the basis of the reports of the kindergarten teachers in regard to the abilities and skills required of children entering kindergarten. The children who graduated from ALMAYA's programmes were compared to two control groups:

TABLE 2: CHILDREN IN THE 1997 FOLLOW-UP STUDY

Description	Number
Graduates of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten	13
Graduates of Home Visiting Programme	24
Children of Ethiopian origin having at least one parent with more than 12 years of formal education	11
Children of Ethiopian origin having parents who were illiterate or who had very little formal education (similar to the parents of the children in the programmes)	7
Children of non-Ethiopian origin from a very poor neighbourhood	13
Total	68

children of Ethiopian immigrants who had not participated in the programme and children in Beer-Sheva who were not of Ethiopian origin (Table 2).

The results were striking, if not statistically significant. In almost all the cognitive skills examined – quantitative thinking, vocabulary and verbal thinking – the achievements of the graduates of ALMAYA's Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and Home Visiting Programme were among the highest if not the highest, compared to the control groups. This was also true of their functioning skills – motor function and social behaviour. Overall, the strongest children were those in the first comparison group – who had at least one parent with more than 12 years of formal education. The children who had participated in ALMAYA's programmes were second in ability, with no significant differences between graduates of the two programmes. However, the parenting skills of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were found to be much higher than those of the Home Visiting Programme parents. The children of non-Ethiopian origin were third in ability, and the lowest group was the children of 'average' parents of Ethiopian origin.

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The Tracer Study

In this study, we sought to examine whether the influence of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten on participating children and parents would still be evident 10 years later. We asked ourselves a number of questions:

1. Can behavioural, cognitive and emotional differences be identified between children of Ethiopian origin who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and children of the Ethiopian community who did not?

2. Are there differences between parents of Ethiopian origin who sent their children to the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and parents who did not participate in the programme in their educational approach and perception of the educational systems in Israel?

3. Can differences be identified between the behaviour of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and that of children who did not participate in the programme, as perceived by parents and teachers?

4. Which group is more similar to children of non-Ethiopian origin of the same age – Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children or children of Ethiopian origin who did not participate in the programme?

To answer these questions, individual interviews were conducted with Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from two neighbourhoods in Beer-Sheva, and with children from the Ethiopian community of the same age from the same two neighbourhoods but who did not participate in the programme. Individual interviews were also

TABLE 3: RESPONDENTS IN THE TRACER STUDY

	Gimmel Parents Cooperative Kindergarten	Gimmel Comparison	Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten	Shaul Hamelech Comparison	Arad	Totals
Children	10	9	26	26	25	96
Parents	6	6	9	10	—	28 parents of 31 children
Teachers	10	9	25	23	—	46 teachers of 67 children

Note: The children of Ethiopian origin were between the ages of 12 to 17 at the time of the interviews. The Arad children (not of Ethiopian origin) were aged 12 to 14.

Children playing, photo: ALMAYA

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conducted with parents and teachers of the children from both groups, as well as with a group of Israeli children of the same age who were not of Ethiopian origin (see Table 3).

Demographics

Economic status

Ethiopian immigrants in the Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel neighbourhoods of Beer-Sheva, as in the rest of the country, are of low socio-economic status. In contrast, Arad is a more affluent town; socio-economically, its residents are of middle to upper-middle class, and the level of services provided to residents, including cultural and educational services, are relatively high compared to those available in Beer-Sheva.

Origin

Children of Ethiopian origin in Shaul Hamelech live in a predominantly Ethiopian community. Gimmel is more mixed, but here too, there is a large concentration of Ethiopian immigrants. By contrast, about 40 percent of the children interviewed in Arad were from families who immigrated from the former Soviet Union, most of whom had not been in Israel as long as the children of Ethiopian origin. However, according to information provided to the interviewer, the culture of these families was very close to that of the host Israeli culture, with no apparent differences between the Arad children and native Israeli children in dress, language or behaviour.

Scholastic level

The school system in Arad is considered one of the best in the country, and the children interviewed in Arad attended an advanced course, with English the main language in many of their classes. In contrast, the system in Beer-Sheva has suffered years of neglect and the schools are not considered as good. The Ethiopian children are in regular classes without the high academic standards of the Arad schools.

Methodology

For this study, four teams were set up to interview the different research populations:

1. **Child interviews** included children from the Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel neighbourhoods – both Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and comparison groups.

2. **Arad group interviews** included children of non-Ethiopian origin in Arad.

3. **Parent interviews** included the parents of the children from Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel.

4. **Teacher interviews** were conducted with the teachers of the Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel children.

The research was based on an *abductive* process, where the findings revealed in the field are formulated as questions which must then be verified. This is in fact a 'hypothesis on probation'; in other words, the research leads to assumptions that require examination until such time that further observation and findings either confirm or refute them (Levin-Rozalis 2000b).

Child interviews

All the children were given open-ended questions in order to let them reveal their own perceptions in their own way and in their own words. However, our experience was that people of Ethiopian origin, irrespective of age, are not talkative. They tend to be very taciturn in any kind of conversation with strangers, let alone in an interview setting. If the children's responses to the questions were too brief, the interviewer encouraged them to elaborate by using follow-up questions, based on their first answers.

The interview was based on three main questions:

1. Tell me about your daily routine.

2. Tell me about a family.

3. Tell a story about the picture.

Tell me about your daily routine

This question provided a look at the significant and formative spheres of the child's life. In the analysis, we looked at the frequency of parameters that were raised, in part spontaneously by the children themselves and in part from the follow-up questions. The analysis was conducted by comparing the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group with the comparison group in each neighbourhood.

After finishing his or her initial answer, the child was asked to give detailed responses to follow-up questions on two issues:

School – What is school like? What happens there?

Homework – What is homework? What do you have to do?

Tell me about a family [3]

This question enabled us to learn about the children's place in their family and the importance of the family in the child's world. In the analysis, we examined the frequency of parameters that were raised spontaneously by the children themselves and through three more specific follow-up questions:

1. What is a family?

2. What does a family do together?

3. What purpose does it serve?

3 It is important to note that the word 'family' was intentionally not made specific. Thus, the question allowed for a wide range of possible answers and stories about the concept of family.

Because this question was worded in such a non-specific way, most of the children had difficulty answering it spontaneously. All the children found it very difficult to understand and usually responded by asking for clarification: *What do you mean by family? Do you want me to tell you about my family? What can I say about family?*

Not all the children were asked all three follow-up questions. The questions they were asked in follow-up were based on their responses to the main question and were asked only when there was some difficulty responding to the main question.

Tell me a story about the picture

Two pictures were used for this part of the interview – one was of a boy (Figure 1), which was presented to the boys being interviewed, and one was of a girl (Figure 2), which was shown to the girls – in order to facilitate identification with the character. The pictures depict a young child of Ethiopian origin with a school bag on her or his back. This question enabled us to learn about the children's inner world and their relationship with their surroundings.

The child was asked to tell a story about the picture. For this question, the

Figure 1: The boy

Figure 2: The girl

(Source: ALMAYA National Resource and Dissemination Centre)

children seemed to need less guidance, and the interviewer accepted relatively short answers. In cases of extremely brief answers, the children were encouraged to develop the story with follow-up questions, such as: *What happened to this boy/girl? What does he/she feel?*

Procedure

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group from Shaul Hamelech neighbourhood was the first to be interviewed. Information about the children was obtained from ALMAYA's records, and the interview was preceded by a telephone conversation in which the purpose of the study was explained to each child, consent to participate in the study was obtained from the child and her or his parents and a meeting at the child's home was arranged. The children were prepared for the interview in advance and it was conducted in their home environment, and in the presence of a parent or relative in some instances.

The Shaul Hamelech comparison group was the second to be interviewed. There was no prior information, such as an address or telephone number, available on the children in this group. These children spent the afternoon at the shopping centre, parks, playgrounds, and in the 'neighbourhood' – the area at the entrance to the housing project. The interviewer approached groups of children that were playing, hanging out, or on their way home from school and asked them to participate in a survey or study being conducted on behalf of the university. The purpose of the study was explained, and if the child agreed, the interview was conducted then and there, in a relatively quiet spot in the vicinity. There was no possibility in the course of the interview to gain an impression of the parents, their involvement, or their relationship with the children.

The third set of interviews were conducted concurrently in Gimmel neighbourhood with the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group and the comparison group. Data on the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children was obtained from ALMAYA's records, and they in turn directed the interviewer to friends from the neighbourhood who served as the comparison group. The interviewer approached almost all the children from both groups with a 'reference' from a friend or neighbour. This was done either by means of a telephone conversation in which the purpose of the study was explained or when the interviewer came to their home with the friend or neighbour. Most of the interviews in Gimmel were conducted at the child's home. In some cases, one of the parents was present, but with the exception of one interview (of a Parents Cooperative Kindergarten child), the parents were much less involved and their presence was barely felt. Siblings were relatively dominant in these interviews, both as hosts and in their

comments during the course of the interview.

The Arad children all attended advanced academic classes in Alon Junior High School, which is considered a good school in Arad. Eleven of the children interviewed were immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Six children mentioned to the interviewer that their parents were separated or divorced, and 22 mentioned that they had siblings. The children willingly agreed to be interviewed and were cooperative in the course of the interview, which took place in a small room allocated for this purpose at the school. Although the interview was identical to that of the Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel children, they were conducted by a different interviewer.

Notes on methodology

The children from both the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and the comparison groups knew each other, were friends and often lived in the same building. However, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were home in the afternoons and were easy to find. They were prepared for the interview, which was conducted in quiet and relaxed surroundings. In contrast, even when the interviews had been prearranged, the comparison group children were often not at home when the interviewer arrived. Some children could not be located, so replacements had to be found. Many of the interviews were conducted outdoors, occasionally accompanied by interruptions from other children, and the children were suspicious and less focused on the interview itself. These problems were evident in the fact that several children did not want to provide personal details or provided false ones (school, teacher's name). There were difficulties understanding the questions, and there were occasional responses that indicated anger or defensiveness: *What family? The same as yours. We do the same as you, all right!? No, I don't want to tell.* A further difference was that the comparison group children were free from parental supervision during the interview.

The method of contact, the location of the interview, and the child's preparedness for the interview, as well as the types of responses given by the child during the interview, could have had an influence on the results we found. However, it should be noted that the same kinds of differences between the groups were found in the parent interviews (conducted by other interviewers who did not know which group the parents belonged to) and the teacher interviews (conducted by yet another interviewer, with neither the interviewer nor the teachers knowing which group the children belonged to). This would support the validity of the processes used.

TABLE 4: PARENT INTERVIEWS

	Parents Cooperative Kindergarten	Comparison	Total
Shaul Hamelech	9	10	19
Gimmel	6	6	12
Total	15	16	31

Parent interviews

We were able to interview only 28 parents (of 31 children), half of the planned sample. The interviews were interesting in themselves, but the small number of parents in each group did not allow for statements of certainty on the differences between the groups for most of the questions.

Most of the information was obtained from one or both parents, but it should be noted that in a minority of cases, the information was provided by older siblings. The interviews were arranged with the mother, so in most cases, the interviewees were the mothers. In three cases, the interviewees were the fathers, and in four cases, both parents were interviewed. Three of the interviewed families were single-parent families as a result of either divorce or the death of the husband.

Research tools

The interviews were made up of seven guiding questions, with follow-up questions to encourage the interviewees to expand on the subject:

1. Tell me a little about your son/daughter (age, grade, school, etc.).
2. Tell me about any special programmes attended by your son/daughter.
3. How would you assess these programmes?
4. In what subjects/spheres is your child more successful, more outstanding?
5. Describe your child's relationship with his/her parents, brothers, the extended family.
6. How do you see your child's future and what would you want for him/her?
7. In your opinion, how can your child be helped to attain this?

Procedure

The parent interviews were conducted over several months and produced a

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relatively small yield. Obtaining the parents' agreement to be interviewed was very difficult, with almost half of them refusing, including those who willingly agreed that we interview their children. With some of the parents who did not directly refuse, it was simply impossible to set up a meeting. The lack of responsiveness possibly stems from the vast amount of research being conducted recently on the Ethiopian community in Beer-Sheva. As a result of parents' language difficulties, seven of the interviews were conducted using translation provided by one of the siblings. A small number of interviews were attended by the children about whom the parents were interviewed. The degree of openness throughout the interviews was relatively low and the responses obtained were concise in the extreme.

Notes on methodology

Because of the community's low response in any study, it is clear to us that the parents who were interviewed are different from those who were not, and there is a concern that the similarity between them is greater than the differences. Furthermore, language difficulties and the presence of the children could also influence the parents' responses and openness.

Teacher interviews

Forty-six teachers were interviewed regarding 67 children from the sixth to the eleventh grades in 17 different primary and secondary schools, rabbinical colleges (*yeshivas*) and boarding schools (Table 5). Teachers of four children could not be located, possibly because their contact details were inaccurate.

Research tools

The interview was divided into three general subjects:

- **Scholastic:** verbal ability and scholastic achievements, participation in class and preparation of homework, attendance, and bringing appropriate equipment and materials to class;
- **Social:** forming social relationships, issues of violence;

TABLE 5: TEACHER INTERVIEWS

	Parents Cooperative Kindergarten	Comparison	Total
Shaul Hamelech	25	23	48
Gimmel	10	9	19
Total	35	32	67

TABLE 6: SCALES USED IN THE TEACHER INTERVIEWS FOR EVALUATING CHILDREN

Area	Scale
General academic standing	1. very weak pupil 2. weak pupil 3. average pupil 4. above-average pupil 5. good pupil 6. excellent pupil
Level of reading	very low low average high very high
Level of writing	very low low average high very high

- **Relationship with parents:** nature of the relationship, parents' attendance at meetings and family situation.

The teachers were asked to provide some general information about how many children of Ethiopian origin were in the school and how many were in the class. They were asked to give a general impression of each child, and to indicate if the child attended classes regularly, if she or he had books and equipment for school, did the homework regularly, was involved in class discussions. They were asked what the strongest and weakest areas of learning were for each child and how the child compared to others in regard to social skills, learning skills, and so on. The questions were open-ended and the teacher was free to respond by relating anything that came to mind about the child. In the course of the interview, various additional subjects were raised by the teachers, such as motivation toward study, integration, the need for different structures and additional support, instability, special abilities, etc.

Teachers were asked to grade the children according to their scholastic abilities: reading, writing, reading

comprehension, verbal expression, and level of conceptualisation and abstract thinking. Since teachers are not allowed to disclose their students' marks to outsiders, the interviewer prepared several scales for them to use in ranking the children (Table 6).

Social skills were evaluated through questions about the children's friends, the ethnic origin of their friends, and the children's behaviour (were there problems with violence, who initiated violent interactions, was the child a victim, etc.). The teachers were also asked about the parents' involvement with the school and what the child's family situation was like.

Procedure

First, permission to interview the teachers was obtained from the district director of the Ministry of Education, and consent was granted by the children's parents. Some of the interviews were conducted face to face, while others were conducted by telephone at the teachers' convenience.

Most of the teachers and schools were very helpful and supportive and were willing to meet and provide the required information. Only a few of the teachers were unwilling to cooperate. These teachers finally agreed to be interviewed following persuasion and discussions with the school principal.

Using the scales provided by the interviewer, teachers were asked to grade the children according to their scholastic abilities. The average grades for each group were then calculated.

Notes on methodology

It is important to note that although the teachers were aware that a follow-up study was being conducted on the long-term effects of preschool programmes, they did not know which group each child belonged to. Moreover, the interviewer herself did not know which group each child belonged to until the analysis stage. Consequently, it can be stated that there was no danger of bias in the teacher interviews.

The analysis process

When all the interviews had been completed, the team for each set of interviews (child interviews, parent interviews, teacher interviews and Arad group interviews) analysed the raw material according to content. The parents' and teachers' comments were divided according to the four groups studied (the two neighbourhoods and the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and comparison groups in each neighbourhood). For the children's responses, the first stage of the analysis involved dividing the responses into content units, with each unit comprising a significant statement or even a phrase.

For example, the sentence 'the boy looks sad, he's ashamed' was split into two separate content units: the feeling of sadness and the feeling of shame. Content units of identical meaning were combined, but if the meanings were similar but not identical, they were kept separate. For example, 'At school I study' and 'Studies at school' were combined into one content unit, whereas 'Study at school' and 'Go to school' remained separate. In the second stage, the content units were assembled into categories according to similarities in the content they reflected. In the third stage, the prevalence of the different categories in each group was examined. Additionally, some of the raw material was also analysed for quality of response (minimalist compared to comprehensive, an entire story about the picture, etc.). After each of the teams had individually analysed their material, the responses were cross-referenced with the findings from the other research tools to construct the full report.

Findings and discussion

Daily routine

The first question in the children's interview was *Tell me about your daily routine.* This is an open-ended question that helps reveal the significant and formative spheres of a child's life. In the analysis, we examined the frequency of parameters that were either raised spontaneously by the children or were brought out by the follow-up questions, such as, *What is school? What happens there? What is homework? What do you have to do for homework?*

Two groups were compared for each neighbourhood: the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group (children who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten) and a comparison group.

For the Gimmel neighbourhood, the differences between the responses of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and the comparison group children were weaker than those in the Shaul Hamelech groups, and there were some conflicting conclusions. This is partly because of the small number of participants in the Gimmel group.

In general, however, a more positive picture was presented by both Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups than by the comparison groups. The areas where the most striking differences were noted are discussed below.

Organisation and activities

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech tended to be better organised and more active than the comparison group; in Gimmel, this was not always the case (differences are specifically noted in the discussion below).

Attitude toward time: *I go to school at eight o'clock. I come back from school at 3:30. Sometimes I'm late for school. I watch TV at four o'clock.* In Shaul Hamelech, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more aware of the importance of organising their day by time than were the comparison group children. In a way, it is possible to say that the social representation of time and planning have changed in this group from 'Ethiopian time' to Israeli/Western time. These findings were just the opposite in Gimmel, where it was the comparison group children whose day was more structured by time.

Getting ready in the morning (morning preparation): In both neighbourhoods, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children used general descriptions of 'getting ready' in the morning *(I get up at 6:30 in the morning, get dressed, get ready. We get up, get ourselves ready.)*

Parents and children attending preschool, photo: ALMAYA 42

Instead of giving details of each required morning activity *(I get up in the morning, wash my face, brush my teeth, comb my hair, get dressed.)*, they mentioned the general process of getting up and getting ready and were not 'dragged' along by each separate activity.

Drinking/eating in the morning: The description of drinking and eating in the morning is assumed to indicate better organisation because it means that there is free time during the morning to eat and drink. (It did not appear that differences in the mention of eating and drinking before school were related to any shortage of food at home.) The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Gimmel reported eating and drinking in the morning more frequently than the comparison group children: *We eat, have a cold drink and go to school. Get ourselves ready, drink, eat.*

Preparing the school bag in the morning: Preparation of the school bag in the morning (putting together the specific books and notebooks needed for that day) is an indicator of a lack of organisation and level of stress, especially when it is clear that the children's time is relatively free in the afternoon. It is interesting to note that in Shaul Hamelech, none of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children got their bag ready in the morning, compared to 11.5 percent of the comparison group children, who specifically mentioned it: *I eat in the morning, get my bag ready, go to school. I get up, get my bag ready, go to class.*

Afternoon activities/leisure time: No differences were found between either of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups in this area. Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in general had a richer use of leisure time than children who had not attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten. They were more active and more focused on specific activities: *I go outside and play soccer; afterwards I play with other children. If there's time, I go out and play with my aunt.* They played more with their friends, which we can interpret as indicating the value they placed on social interactions or the higher level of activity in general. The variety of the games they played was also broader than in the comparison groups: *I play soccer here, or I ride my bike. I play soccer with the guys.*

Although the comparison group children also spent their afternoons with friends, they described less active and less organised activities: *I go out with friends; I hang around and things like that. I go for walks with my friends.* Children in the comparison group who mentioned a specific activity mentioned soccer only, whereas the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children mentioned soccer, basketball, biking. Rather than indicating that the comparison group children took part in less varied activities, it is also

possible that these reports indicate a greater ability to provide details on the part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children.

The Arad Group children showed organised thinking and activity similar to the trend found among Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, and both groups displayed active behavioural patterns, particularly in descriptions of their activities in the afternoon. They noted studying at home as a significant part of their daily routine and described their recreational activities, which included organised games, extracurricular classes and getting together with friends. Nevertheless, the activities of the Arad children appeared to be more structured within formal frameworks (extracurricular classes) than the activities of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, which were more independent and subsequently less rigid (playing with friends in the neighbourhood). This may also be the result of socio-economic differences. Paying for extracurricular classes is characteristic of the middle classes, whereas the lower classes are dependent on extracurricular classes provided by organisations like ALMAYA or the Ministry of Labour and Welfare – activities that are usually social (such as choir or soccer) rather than academic. Hence, the activity of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children was, by necessity, more independent and displayed a situation of greater initiative and activeness.

Importance of home and family

In general, in Shaul Hamelech, the home and family played a more important role in the routines of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children than in those of the comparison group. This difference was not so clear in Gimmel.

Help at home: A higher percentage of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech mentioned doing chores at home in their description of their day: *I help my mother clean up the house. I get up in the morning and go to the store – buy bread, rolls.* Doing chores at home indicates the place of children in the family, the responsibility given to them and the importance that the home has for them. In contrast, it was the comparison group in Gimmel who described helping at home more: *I bring my brother home from kindergarten. I clean up the house.*

Returning home from school: The simple mention of returning home from school (*I study until one o'clock, go home, have a glass of water. I get to school and then afterwards I go home. I come home from school.*) most likely indicates the child's perception of home as a place of origin – from which one comes and to which one returns. More of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from both neighbourhoods described home in this way.

All the Arad children and most of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten

children talked about coming home from school. Most of the children in both groups ended their descriptions of their daily routines at home in the evening, and a number of children in both the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and Arad groups said they helped with housework. Moreover, the children from both groups were perceived by their parents as mature and responsible; hence, they were given responsibility for chores around the house.

The day ending in the afternoon: The day's routine seemed to end with games and activities in the afternoon for more children from the Shaul Hamelech comparison group, without any description of the return home or the evening spent there. Apparently, the return home or the time spent with family members within the confines of the home was not important. More children from the comparison group ended their descriptions with playing outside: *I play soccer, walk around. I watch some television and go outside.* Similarly, the children from the Gimmel comparison group showed a tendency to begin or end the description of their day with school, without reference to what happened either before or afterwards: *I get to school in about a half an hour and that's it. School is nine hours.* This kind of description probably indicates the dominant (perhaps even threatening) place occupied by school in their life, and the minor place for home and family.

Attitude toward school and studies

We can say that the most striking differences between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and the comparison groups were found in their attitudes toward school and studies. These findings were similar for both neighbourhoods. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were not threatened by their studies; they studied at home and they perceived school in a positive light: *It's interesting in school. How do we study? Great.* It is a place to meet friends, have a good time and play. They perceived the lesson as an event in which they took an active part: *We study with the teacher, ask questions. If I don't understand, I ask. Some teachers don't understand; we correct them.*

In contrast, the comparison group children perceived the purpose of studying at home as obeying the teachers and complying with school authorities. While able to play at school and have a good time, they were less likely than the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children to enjoy school, and therefore tended to express helplessness and negative feelings toward school: *It's a bit difficult for me to study; it's hard to concentrate. I'm a good student; no, just kidding, I'm so-so. Studying is boring. School is irritating.*

Studying at home: The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from both neighbourhoods studied at home more than the comparison group

children: *I come home from the synagogue, do homework. If I have homework I do it. If we have to get ready for a test, we do.* For the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, homework was a more central occupation during the day than it was for the comparison group. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children studied independently at home and were motivated by their desire to understand and get ahead with the material. Independent study at home reveals organised thinking in preparation for the next day's studies, and the ability to carry out tasks independently. The ability to study alone indicates positive self-esteem, which was expressed in sentences like the following: *Teachers treat me accordingly. They invest more in us.*

The comparison group children mentioned going to school and studying more often than the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children: *I go to school, study. In the morning I go to school and study.* This is characteristic of an attitude toward studies and learning as something that happens in school rather than something that happens within the children themselves.

The purpose of homework: Both comparison groups described doing homework as an obligation – as something that one did in obedience to the teacher: *Questions that the teacher asks. Material that we are given in class to do at home. Math, Bible, I do what I'm told. I do whatever the teacher gives me.*

In contrast, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children identified the teachers' aims in assigning the homework (*They want to check whether I understood the explanations.*), their own desire to understand the material better (*This way we'll understand the material and come to the lesson prepared.*) and as a way of getting ahead or reviewing lessons (*We study in school and whatever we don't have enough time for we get to do at home. We get ahead with the homework. We review the lesson.*).

Playing in school, recess in school: *I go to school, there's a recess and I play. Sometimes I go out during the recess and play soccer. I get to school and sit with friends. I go to school, I study and I play. I joke around with my friends during the recess; I play soccer.* Both groups of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children enjoyed school more than the comparison groups; they played and spent time with friends and their school activities were not limited to studying.

There was a difference in attitude between Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and the Arad children in their perception of school and studies. The Arad children stated that they went to school but did not describe their activities there, such as studies, recesses, playing. The lack of reference to school by the Arad children

might indicate their perception of the school as not being central in their lives. By comparison, in both the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and the comparison groups, the children described in some detail one activity or another in which they participated within the school framework. Furthermore, five children from the Arad group began descriptions of their daily routine only after school, which might indicate the marginal role school played in their daily routine: *After school I go home, eat lunch, watch television.* This is just the opposite to what was found in the comparison group in Gimmel neighbourhood, where some of the children began or ended descriptions of their daily routines at school. It is difficult to explain these differences. But it is possible that the relative centrality of school for the children in Gimmel and Shaul Hamelech stems from the importance of the social interaction there or from the sparseness of formal frameworks available to them (compared to the extracurricular activities available to the Arad children), so school is the central activity of the day. It is also possible that a wider range of activities was available to Ethiopian children within the school framework since many schools receive funding for special programmes for Ethiopian-origin pupils.

The family

The second question in the interview with the children was *Tell me about a family.* This was an open-ended question that enabled us to learn about the children's place in their families and the importance of the family in their world. In the analysis, we examined the frequency of parameters that were raised spontaneously by the children themselves and in response to the three follow-up questions: *What is a family? What does a family do together? What purpose does it serve?*

In general, both Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups presented a more positive picture than did the comparison groups. Again, the differences between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and comparison groups in Gimmel tended to be weaker than those in Shaul Hamelech – and at times, the findings were conflicting. This could be because of the relatively small number of participants in Gimmel or the fewer programmes aimed at this community in that neighbourhood.

Quality of the responses

The responses from the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group in Shaul Hamelech tended to be comprehensive – responses that were picturesque and colourful, varied and detailed. In this kind of response, the child talked about relationships, the atmosphere, plans, and personal details about family members at different times and in a variety of activities:

[A family is] a good thing – they support us during difficult and good times. Not a good thing – they bother you a lot, fight. That includes me. Verbally – not physically. My sister is like a dragon that guards a tower. You go into her room and she eats you. You see just a crumb and she starts screaming, kick-boxing. Then we start to play up to father or mother. Get good grades and then they are on your side, and tell her what to do and I play. My brother, Benny, he has a style of his own. He has a house, but he's outside all day long. He comes back from school, throws down his school bag, and goes out the whole day. But sometimes he hangs and folds the laundry. My sister gets annoyed easily and is annoying, and stingy, [but] when she has something, she gives it. Sometimes she's good to us; we play together.

I have a family that I love and it's fun to be part of it. Whenever I need something, everyone helps me. They ask me what happened and help me. My mother wants to go out for a walk, but she doesn't have much time. She works from six in the morning until three, gets home at four and prepares the food. Before that, my brother or I clean up the house. Sometimes, when it's his turn, I help him.

There were no such comprehensive responses in the Shaul Hamelech comparison group. Their responses tended to be more formulaic, shorter and simpler: *A family is like people who do things together. My siblings, my parents.* Their answers added relatively little to the description of the nuclear family and the relationships within it. For example: *We are four siblings, two brothers and two sisters; my father died; we get along fine. My sister studies; my mother works; my brother is in the army; Menashe studies; brothers, sisters, parents; we go for walks, play.*

In Gimmel, more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had difficulty responding to the questions and gave minimalist responses, in contrast to the more picturesque responses of the comparison group, such as the following: *It's fun in this family. We moved to this neighbourhood. My brothers worry. My parents are concerned for me when I go outside. They tell me to come home early and not to walk around too much.* However, the small size of the groups in Gimmel makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from this.

Family members

Many of the children from both groups gave details about members of the family in their descriptions: *Family, father, mother, brother and sister. We are 10 in my family; my parents don't work; my brother's in the army; my sister studies; two others are in school and two others are in nursery school.* In general, a higher percentage of the Parents Cooperative

Kindergarten children in both Gimmel and Shaul Hamelech provided some kind of detail about members of the family than did either of the comparison groups. This shows a more organised way of thinking on the part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, who provided relevant information to an outsider.

We found four different kinds of descriptions of family members:

Full description – father, mother, siblings: A higher percentage of both groups of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children gave full descriptions of their family:

> *With my parents we are six people. We are eight siblings, two brothers and six sisters. My father is a warden at the Eshel Prison; my mother doesn't work; my brother is in a religious elementary school here; my 13-year-old sister studies in Makif Bet Religious Girls' High School; my sister Stav, who is five years old, is in the Shalom Kindergarten here in the neighbourhood.*

Partial description – parents only without mentioning siblings: No real difference was found in the percentage of children from either the Parent Kindergarten or comparison groups who described their parents only. This kind of description might indicate a desire to establish an exclusive position in the family, the search for better treatment from the parents. Examples of partial descriptions of this kind include:

> *One family that has children; mother and father who take care of everything and that's all. One who plans with the one he loves and has children.*

Partial description – siblings only without mentioning parents: It's interesting to note that in Shaul Hamelech, none of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children gave responses that mentioned siblings only. Responses of this kind were given by the Shaul Hamelech comparison group and both groups in Gimmel:

> *I have six siblings, with me that's seven; they all study in school; one's in the army, one in kindergarten, one in school, two in nursery school.*

This kind of description could indicate a weak image of parents who do not fulfil their expected parental role, based on the Israeli reality and which assigns specific expectations to parents. Sometimes the parents cannot live up to these expectations because they lack the knowledge or tools with which to fulfil the role of the Israeli parent. The activities of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten tried to overcome these potential gaps in the immigrants' first encounter with Israel during the child's

early life. Perhaps, in contrast to Shaul Hamelech, where there were additional programmes to support parents in adapting to their role in Israel, in Gimmel the progress that was achieved with the children alone did not extend to the parents. Therefore, the gap between the children's expectations and the parents' roles widened.

Expanded description (complete description of family members with the addition of aunts and uncles, grandparents, friends): This kind of expanded description may indicate a feeling of belonging to the Ethiopian community, awareness of roots and a connection to a larger group. It is noteworthy that none of the children in Gimmel gave an expanded description of their family. In Shaul Hamelech, both groups described their family members and added distant family members. A slightly higher percentage of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children provided such a description. Reference to more distant relatives, such as grandparents or aunts and uncles, was also made by four of the Arad children, who were new immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Interactions in the family

In general, both groups of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children described more emotional and cognitive interactions with their family members. The children in both comparison groups found it more difficult to describe the emotional experience at home, or to describe cognitive interactions. They perceived the family as a place where one takes care of practical and technical needs. This difference might indicate a better ability to identify and express emotions on the part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, as well as a deeper understanding on the part of their family members of the knowledge needed by children in the Israeli context, and a greater ability to provide it. Examples of the different responses include the following:

Emotional: *Parents worry. They support you when you need it; they're on your side. We love each other. We tell secrets. When something happens to you, should you keep it bottled up, to yourself? You have to tell someone.*

Cognitive: *When they bring me up well. They help in studies.*

Instrumental: *You need money; they give it to you right away. So you have someplace to live.*

Relationship to family

Despite the expression of specific feelings about one's family, 'relationship to family' is a general category that provides an outside look at the family. Examples of a positive relationship to family are *a good family, a normal family* and *everything's good in the family.* An

example of a negative relationship to family is *a crazy family*. In addition, this use of a standard phrase to describe the family (i.e., 'a good family') may indicate an external view of the family that might not necessarily express a true positive feeling for it. It probably points to a less concrete, less detailed way of thinking and the use of catchwords or slogans instead of true, open expressions. This type of response could also indicate departmentalisation of information or a reluctance to reveal intimate family details to a stranger.

In Gimmel, only comparison group children used such standard phrases in relation to their families; the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children expressed themselves in a more concrete and emotional manner (for example, in relation to the role of parents). In Shaul Hamelech the comparison group children gave more positive descriptions of their relationship to the family and the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children gave more negative descriptions. We should consider here the fact that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech also cited more negative feelings (anger, irritation, loneliness, embarrassment) in their emotional descriptions than the comparison group children. This indicates that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more open during the interview, or perhaps more aware of their own negative emotions.

What does the family do together?
The Shaul Hamelech children gave three types of responses to the directed question, *What does the family do together?*

Communication at home: Responses involving communication were relatively more common among the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children: *We talk. We laugh. We tell secrets. We get angry at each other.* This reinforces the image of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group as children who had a more developed ability to express feelings and who belonged to families in which more emotional interactions took place.

Activities outside the home: In the Shaul Hamelech comparison group, responses involving outside activities appeared relatively more frequently: *We go for walks. We visit aunts and uncles. We go shopping.* This reflects the tendency of the comparison group to concentrate on outside events rather than on home events and reinforces the finding of more instrumental interactions in these families. The family does not exist for its own sake, but as an aid in satisfying needs that can be attained outside the home.

Activities at home: There was a striking difference between the two Shaul Hamelech groups in their response to this question. A higher percentage of

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children described activities such as *television, games, sitting around, doing homework and celebrating holidays together.* These descriptions paint a picture of these families as active units, centred in the home, performing activities that are central to the Israeli reality, like television or doing homework, activities that have a place in these homes.

What is the purpose of the family? (What is it good for?)

The children in both Shaul Hamelech groups gave a variety of responses to this question. One difference between the two groups was found in issues raised by the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and not by the comparison group children. These responses described extremely difficult situations in which the family was the supporting body that helped cope with the situation, for example: *Suppose you were sick in the hospital; friends wouldn't come and stay with you all the time; if you didn't have a family, no one would worry or take care of you. The family always helps; suppose other people abandon you, you could always go back to your family, even if the world was destroyed. When you come across bad times, you can always talk to your brothers and sisters, a body that supports you.* These findings indicate the children's absolute security in their family and the fact that they can rely on it in any situation. The fact that children raised the possibility of hard times could demonstrate, on the one hand, anxiety about disasters that can occur in the world, or a realistic attitude toward possible difficulties that could arise in life and a feeling of readiness to cope with them. It also showed organisation – in that they look to the future and plan ahead.

Feelings

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech seemed to have a more developed emotional range than comparison group children. With regard to emotions aroused in connection with the family, the Shaul Hamelech comparison group children mentioned only two possible emotions (love and worry), whereas the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children described eight different emotions (anger, pleasure, love, irritation, to feel like myself, worry, loneliness, embarrassment).

The picture

In the last part of the interview, the children were asked, *Tell me a story about the picture* (see Chapter 2). This question enabled us to learn about the children's inner world and relationship to their surroundings. We analysed the responses according to the frequency of parameters that were raised spontaneously by the children.

The responses of the two groups in the Shaul Hamelech neighbourhood were

extremely interesting (Table 7), with striking differences in several areas. Note that there were fewer differences between the two Gimmel groups, but in general, the responses of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in both Shaul Hamelech and Gimmel were more positive than those of the comparison groups.

Organisation and invention (Shaul Hamelech)

Once upon a time there was a family . . .
Once upon a time there was a child . . .
A higher percentage of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech created a complete story when asked to tell about the picture. Creating a story with a beginning, middle and end demonstrates thinking that is more organised and, perhaps, even a greater ability for verbal expression.

Giving a story a title enhances the ability to tell a complete story, since the title 'defines' the story and frames it. The fact that a title was given at the beginning of the story shows organised thinking from the outset. Similarly, giving a name to the character featured in the story demonstrates closeness and ownership of the character. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech were the only ones who gave a title to their story: *Daniel goes to school. Mengisto gets lost.*

The plots described by the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had more action. The character did something, interacted with her or his surroundings – like the children themselves: *plays soccer, hangs up his school bag, goes out with friends.*

The importance of parents and family (Shaul Hamelech)

The parents are sure to watch her. She wants to go tell her parents. The father went to school with the boy. Mention of parents in the story may indicate relationships that are significant for the children in real life. In general, the stories of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech revealed greater parental involvement in their lives. These children also tended to include relationships with siblings in their stories (*Looks like my brother. Her brother picks her up.*) and they mentioned helping with chores (*She loves to help in the house.*). This could be related to the children's attitude toward the home as a place where things happen, along with an indication of relationships, connections and interactions among family members. The home is a place where the child has a role and responsibility.

Belonging to the Ethiopian community

Although the differences were not as strong in Gimmel, the stories of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in both neighbourhoods

TABLE 7: RESPONSES TO THE REQUEST TO DESCRIBE THE PICTURE

		Shaul Hamelech		Gimmel	
Area	Details	Parents Cooperative Kindergarten N=26 percent (number)	Comparison N=26 percent (number)	Parents Cooperative Kindergarten N=10 percent (number)	Comparison N=9 percent (number)
Organisation and invention	Complete story	34.6 (9)	7.6 (2)	—	—
	Title for story	23 (6)	—	—	—
Importance of parents and family	Action stories	53.8 (14)	42.3 (11)	—	—
	Mention of parents in the story	38.4 (10)	7.6 (2)	—	—
	Mention of family in the story	19.2 (5)	3.8 (1)	—	—
Belonging to Ethiopian community	Connection to Ethiopian community	42.3 (11)	26.9 (7)	100 (10)	78 (7)
	Active connection	15.3 (4)	—	—	—
	Distant reference	—	19.2 (5)	—	—
Relationship to community	Feeling of weakness	—	26.9 (7)	—	—
	Active conflict	15.3 (4)	—	—	—
	Entertainment	19.2 (5)	3.8 (1)	—	—
Feelings	Variety of feelings	—	—	60 (6)	22 (2)
	Sun, summer – positive?	—	—	20 (2)	—
	Goes/comes from home	53.8 (14)	76.9 (20)	—	—
	First time at school	—	—	30 (3)	11 (1)
School and studies	Studies at home	11.5 (3)	—	—	—
	Happy to study	38.4 (10)	15.3 (4)	—	—

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indicated a greater sense of connection with the Ethiopian community than did those of either comparison group. The stories of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children included more detailed references to community and the characters were more often identified as Ethiopian: *Ethiopian boy. That's a girl who emigrated from Ethiopia.* Thus, a part of the plot had something to do with, or was connected to, the fact of being Ethiopian: *When she came from Ethiopia she had no friend. Once upon a time there was a family in a village; there were no buses there.* The sense of belonging to a community expressed in the story may demonstrate a greater feeling of security in one's roots and of social belonging.

Social interaction

There was a striking difference between the two groups in Shaul Hamelech with regard to the social environment. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more active and displayed greater initiative toward their surroundings. In contrast, the comparison group children were more passive. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children indicated positive feelings toward the character by wanting to get closer and become friends (*She looks nice; I want to be her friend.*) or they thought that the character wanted to get closer and make friends (*She is going to make new friends.*). When the comparison group children expressed positive feelings toward the character, they described her or him as having positive feelings, but from afar: *She is smiling. She is happy.*

In general, in Shaul Hamelech, the comparison group children expressed more negative feelings about the character than the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children: *He's tired of life. They used to insult him.* They also expressed negative feelings in relation to society, stemming from a situation of weakness. The character is threatened, helpless and taken advantage of: *Poor thing, all alone. He's taken advantage of by the children; he's afraid of them all. They used to insult her.* In contrast, the negative feelings described by the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children stemmed from active conflicts between the character and her or his surroundings. The character is powerful, quarrelsome and equal to the other characters: *Fist fighting. Fights with someone and starts hitting.*

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech described a character who goes out and has a good time in a variety of activities: *She's happy to go out and have a good time. He's playing soccer. She loves to dance.* Similarly, they described an active character who creates a rich and interesting environment for her or himself.

Feelings (Gimmel)

Although we did not find a difference in the percentage of children who described emotions in their stories, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Gimmel mentioned a wider variety of emotions (*happy, satisfied, under pressure, afraid, embarrassed*) than the comparison group children (*happy, embarrassed*).

I see the sun here; it's summer. It seems to be summer. Relating to the weather in the picture and the description of the story with its sun-filled summer scenery could also indicate more positive feelings on the part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children.

School and studies

The school bag was intentionally included in the picture in order to trigger responses concerning school and studies. As with the findings from the question about daily routine, it is possible to discern two different attitudes toward school and studies. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech described a character who studied independently at home. Because of the ability to study alone, these characters were not threatened by studies and were happy to go to school. In contrast, the characters invented by the comparison group children were more often at school than at home. School played a very significant, if

Boys on their way to school, photo: ALMAYA

threatening, role and therefore the character was less likely to be happy to go.

The character goes to and comes home from school: *She's on her way to school. A boy coming home from school.* In the stories of the Shaul Hamelech comparison group, the characters either went to school or returned from school. The action depended on what happened in school. This frequent mention of school could indicate its dominant role. (It is likely that the children perceived school this way because they studied there exclusively and not at home.) In the stories of the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, on the other hand, the character was personally active and created her or his own plot: *She's happy to go out and have a good time.*

The character studies at home: *We do our homework together. I do my homework.* The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech introduced the fact that the child in the picture did his/her homework. Independent study demonstrates a feeling of greater ability and capability. For these children, learning was for themselves rather than for the school.

The character is happy to learn: The characters in the stories of the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were happy to go to school and happy to learn. Studying was not threatening to them; they knew that they were able to learn and succeed: *She'll have a great time . . . learning something new. She's happy to go to school.*

First time at school: The only difference between the two Gimmel groups regarding school was that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children said that the character in the picture was going to school for the first time more often than the comparison group children. This could indicate a more positive attitude toward school: *It seems to be the first time that she is going to school and she is happy.* Or indeed, it could indicate greater tension and a threat from school: *Getting ready for the first day of school, the start of studies, a bit of pressure.*

Parent interviews

Unfortunately, despite the interviews being interesting in themselves, the small number of parents in each group did not allow statements of certainty about the differences between the groups in most areas. Here, we discuss only those areas in which the differences between groups were sufficient to make a reasonable argument.

Differences between the neighbourhoods

Some interesting differences between the two neighbourhoods did arise in a number of areas:

- While all the parents from Shaul Hamelech mentioned something about their child's studies, 40 percent of the Gimmel parents did not mention the subject at all. No significant difference was found between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group and the comparison group in either neighbourhood.

- Approximately half of the Shaul Hamelech parents (in both groups) mentioned their children's hobbies, while only one parent from Gimmel (from the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group) addressed this subject.

- Parents in all the groups had some involvement with the school. The mothers from Shaul Hamelech (in both groups) were far more involved in school matters than their counterparts from Gimmel. The Gimmel fathers were more involved than the mothers. It was found that in the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, the involvement of both parents was greater than that of the comparison group.

- The focus of parental responsibility was one area examined – to what degree did parents assume responsibility for their children's situation and future. It should be noted that in Gimmel, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group tended to assume less responsibility than the comparison group, while in Shaul Hamelech, the opposite was true – more parents from the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group expressed an internal focus of parental comparison: *I can't help with studies but I convey messages through stories and proverbs.*

- In Shaul Hamelech, the parents saw a connection between the child and their willingness to help, more so than the Gimmel parents. As one parent said, *I will support and finance her on condition that she studies.*

The differences between the two neighbourhoods are extremely interesting. In Shaul Hamelech, the parents took a greater interest in their children's studies and hobbies, they assumed greater responsibility for their children's future, and viewed it in a more focused way than the parents in the Gimmel neighbourhood. This is apparently related to the fact that over the years, there have been more programmes for the Ethiopian population in Shaul Hamelech than in Gimmel, where only the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten was active.

Differences between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and the comparison groups

The main difference between the sets of parents is that the Parent Kindergarten

parents saw themselves as responsible for their children's future, and saw this future more clearly, than did the parents of the comparison groups.

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents in both neighbourhoods mentioned their children's behaviour far less than either comparison group. This finding could have a number of explanations. The first is that the former Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had no behavioural problems, which seems unrealistic since the comparison group parents noted good behaviour as well as negative behaviour. The second explanation is that even though there might be behavioural problems, they were of no interest to the parents. The third explanation is that the child's behaviour was experienced differently, or accorded a different value, by the two groups of parents. For example, in the Shaul Hamelech comparison group, eight parents out of the sample of 10 mentioned proper behaviour: *Well-mannered, successful, I'm proud of her. Helps at home with her little brothers. A role model for his little brothers.* One parent noted some deterioration in behaviour, but added that his son helped his brothers, and the remaining parent did not mention behaviour. The most logical explanation is that the difference between the groups of parents was related to the importance the parents attributed to the entire question of behaviour. While the comparison group parents seemed to perceive the child's behaviour as an important part of their description and personality, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents did not.

It is difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions from such a small sample. However, if we put this outcome together with the phenomenon we encounter so frequently among Ethiopian parents, we may shed some light on our findings. Many Ethiopian parents complain about 'bad education' and lack of respect in the host Israeli society and subsequently mention their child's good behaviour. This type of accounting embodies more than a simple statement about the child. If we continue this line of thought and say that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents have accepted that polite behaviour is not a central value according to which they should measure their child, and combine this with the rest of the sparse findings, it may appear that acceptance of the host society's norms is stronger among Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents (and parents from the Shaul Hamelech neighbourhood) than it is among comparison group parents (and parents from the Gimmel neighbourhood).

The parents in both Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups expressed more concrete and directed aspirations regarding their children's future than the comparison group parents, who spoke in

more general terms: *A good life. He should be happy.* The parents from the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group mentioned the child's future family more: *I hope he finds a good bride, a warm home.* The parents from both comparison groups tended to leave responsibility for the child's future in the child's own hands than did the parents from the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group.

It is difficult to know whether the absence of more striking differences was due to the small size of the groups or the fact that in reality, there were none. In any event, the main and most constant population in the Parents Cooperative Kindergartens were the children, with the parents appearing for roster duty once a month, if at all. The expectation of significant differences between the parents' populations following such short exposure to the kindergarten was possibly exaggerated.

However, the differences we did find, coupled with the findings from the interviews with the children themselves, bring us to the conclusion that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children conveyed a different message to their parents than the children from the comparison groups. They were clearer about their studies and hobbies, and these were important to them; hence, these activities were also 'acceptable' to the parents. They saw their future more clearly; hence, their parents could convey a clearer message. They also shared the responsibility for their future with their parents, while the children from the comparison groups had no such expectations – they stood alone on the battlefield. Their parents also perceived the situation in this way: that responsibility for a child's future was in the child's hands.

Teacher interviews

In the teacher interviews, the children's organisational abilities were evident in their understanding of the school framework and their integration into it. Most of the children in all four groups were well integrated. They understood what was required of them within the school framework, attended regularly and on time, brought the required equipment and materials, and tried to prepare their homework to the best of their ability. The proportion of children who were not integrated, or who displayed integration problems, was slightly higher in the comparison group than in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, but the difference was negligible. These problems included instances of tardiness, absences from school or lessons for no reason, not bringing the required equipment and materials, not preparing homework, wandering around outside the classroom and disruptive behaviour. None of these activities necessarily indicate problems in perception of frameworks.

Activeness

The responses to the question of the children's level of activeness revealed an inclination toward passivity in all groups: *She was hardly noticeable during the annual class outing. She's a very closed child. He's very quiet, like a fish, very introverted; you have to squeeze things out of him.* However, more children in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were considered active in all spheres (in class, during recess, in organised activities, in social settings), than in the comparison group. While it should be noted that there were more children in the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group who were considered very passive in all spheres, more children in the comparison group were considered moderately active compared to the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, and more were characterised as passive in class and active during recess. From the teachers' perspective in the classroom, it appeared that the comparison group children were more passive in class and required more encouragement to be active than the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children.

The active children in the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were involved in class and in their social circle, showed initiative, were active and interested in what was going on around them, they organised parties and they performed tasks well.

There was an apparent difference between the Shaul Hamelech groups in their activity patterns in that there were more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children at both extremes: children who were very active in all spheres, both in class and socially, on the one hand, and children who displayed a moderate level of activity or who were passive in one sphere and active in another. However, the teachers' descriptions regarding the children's passivity in the comparison group were more extreme (*The children are not heard in class at all, very introverted. Fish.*), to the extent that the teachers found it difficult to assess these children's verbal abilities. Descriptions of passive behaviour in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were less extreme.

With regard to social dominance, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were found to be more socially involved and popular and were described as socially dominant and social leaders. In Gimmel, this pattern was complicated by the finding that while none of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were described as completely socially passive, more comparison group children were described as dominant.

Active and initiating behaviour was also revealed in statements about the child's special talents or abilities. Although this question was not asked explicitly in the interview, the teachers spontaneously

mentioned special abilities or a remarkable quality, such as a talent for drawing and art, drama, music, sports, a remarkable sense of humour, or leadership qualities. No such statements were made about the comparison group, with the exception of three children who excelled in sports. This shed a special light on the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, where the children expressed themselves creatively, were talented in specific fields, and found ways to channel and express their inner feelings.

A further item that arose from the teacher interviews was in regard to the expression of independent opinions on social issues. It was stated that four of the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children participated in class debates, especially on social issues, and in home-room discussions on justice and Judaism. They expressed their opinions independently, without fear of other children's reactions. No such statement was made regarding even one of the comparison group children.

In general, the wealth of description in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group was greater and more diverse, with more content-related issues raised in the teacher interviews about this group. Thus, for example, the teachers stated more often that they had *no way of knowing what* the level of motivation was with regard to children from the comparison group. This difference may indicate that the presence of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children was prominent in the classroom and attracted the teacher's attention, positively or negatively. These children revealed more facets at school and in the classroom, expressed themselves in more spheres, they were more active and tended to take initiatives.

School and studies

Differences in the children's perceptions of school and studies, as well as in actual success in this area could be found in the teacher interviews. Table 8 presents a comparison between the percentage of children in each group who were graded by their teachers in regard to school and studies.

In general, it appeared that the scholastic abilities and achievements of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were higher than those of the comparison group. More Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from both neighbourhoods were graded by their teachers as having high scholastic ability and average to high scholastic achievement. According to the scholastic achievement scale, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech showed higher average scholastic achievement than the comparison group: 3.12, compared to 2.6 for the comparison group. In Gimmel, the differences were not so striking, but all of the Parents

TABLE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF FINDINGS FROM THE TEACHER INTERVIEWS DEALING WITH PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL AND STUDIES

	Shaul Hamelech		Gimmel	
Topics associated with perception of school performance	Parents Kindergarten N=25 percent (number)	Comparison N=23 percent (number)	Parents Kindergarten N=10 percent (number)	Comparison N=9 percent (number)
High scholastic ability	80 (20)	60 (14)	100 (10)	67 (6)
High scholastic achievement	76 (19)	56 (13)	90 (9)	67 (6)
Good verbal abilities	80 (20)	60 (14)	—	—
Cannot be graded	20 (5)	30 (7)	—	—
High motivation	24 (6)	39 (9)	—	—
Low motivation	60 (15)	39 (9)	—	—
Unknown	16 (4)	22 (5)	—	—
Require additional support	68 (17)	52 (12)	80 (8)	33 (3)

Cooperative Kindergarten children were rated moderate to very high in scholastic ability; none was graded as weak. In contrast, three of the comparison group children were rated as poor.

The interviews also indicated that in Shaul Hamelech, more of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had moderate to very high verbal abilities than the comparison group children. When the question about levels of verbal expression was asked, more comparison group children were described as not verbally expressing themselves in class at all, and the teachers were therefore unable to grade them on this ability (although this was mentioned about children in both groups).

The teachers in Shaul Hamelech mentioned that more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children required additional support, such as personal attention, warmth and encouragement or reinforcement classes, a personal

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tutor, boarding school or a smaller class. The interviewer gained a strong impression that the teachers sought help for these children and feared that their needs were not being addressed.

It is interesting to note that in Shaul Hamelech, there appeared to be more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children who did not view studying as a top priority – they were perceived by their teachers as investing no effort, not using their abilities to the full, and not interested in getting help or getting ahead: *Doesn't do anything during lessons. Doesn't dedicate time or effort to his studies.* The comparison group were seen as somewhat better in this, although it was difficult to characterise this group one way or the other. While this finding seems to contradict the comparatively higher standing of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in regard to academic achievement and ability, it should be noted that this characteristic has no bearing on scholastic success. A child who invests no effort and shows no interest in studying may still be successful and attain a high level of achievement. It may well be that in this situation, the teachers expected more from these children and were disappointed when they did not use their abilities to the full.

By the same token, it is possible that the teachers' perceptions that the comparison group children who showed low scholastic achievements and abilities but were reasonably motivated to study were simply a case of the teachers' low expectations from these children. In other words, a 'motivation gap' was not formed. This explanation also supports the overall picture of fewer comparison group children being in supportive frameworks, despite their acute need for such frameworks, according to their teachers. It is therefore possible that the relative advantage of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children (higher scholastic abilities and achievements, with a more active and noticeable presence in the school) led to their needs being addressed on the one hand (by, for example, a supportive school framework) but to higher expectations of them on the other.

Home and family

One of the findings from the teacher interviews refers to parental influence on the child's behaviour. In other words, when the parents pressured the child and intervened, there was a distinct improvement, and as soon as they loosened the reins, the child returned to her or his previous behaviour. Although the differences between the groups were not statistically significant, a trend was evident. A greater number of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents were involved and concerned and initiated contact with the teacher. In contrast, the comparison group parents were detached and less aware – contact occurred only when necessary, if at all.

In the Gimmel interviews, in general, parental influence was mentioned more by teachers of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, and the lack of influence was mentioned only in the comparison group.

The teachers in Shaul Hamelech mentioned five cases of parental influence in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, but in the comparison group, no mention was made of parents who influenced their children – only non-influential parents were mentioned. This could be due to parental influence being insignificant or nonexistent in this group. There was also a difference in the intensity of non-influence between the two groups. In the comparison group, the teachers spoke in absolute terms, whereas in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, it was inferred from the teachers that there was communication with the non-influential parents and that the teachers knew the reasons for the lack of influence. The teachers stated that the parents did not have much influence because of such things as communication difficulties with the child, an inability to help in scholastic areas, or a lack of awareness about the importance of influence and of contact with the teacher. Some of the parents felt that they were unable to help and asked for assistance from the school or the teacher. Two fathers claimed that the father figure was not sufficiently authoritative in Israel, which resulted in the children having more freedom and the family having less control.

Teachers were asked about their contact with the parents and what form this contact took. They were also asked whether the parents regularly attended parent meetings. Compared to the comparison group parents, a higher percentage of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents were either very involved with their children's schooling or involved when necessary. These parents could be characterised as appreciating the importance of contact with the teacher. With some parents, this awareness was shown when they initiated contact and involvement, but with others, their lack of awareness was evident in the fact that they attended parent meetings only when summoned. More comparison group parents had very poor contact with the teacher, did not attend parent meetings at all, and were not well informed about their children's situation at school. The reasons stated by the teachers for this lack of contact were language difficulties, lack of awareness, or a feeling that they had no ability to help.

Sense of belonging to and contact with the community

The children's association with members of the community was examined in the teacher interviews. Three patterns of association were found in the Shaul Hamelech children:

- **Association mainly with non-Ethiopian children:** A higher percentage of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children associated mainly with non-Ethiopian children, compared with the comparison group.

- **Association with both non-Ethiopian children and children of Ethiopian origin:** A higher percentage of comparison group children associated with both non-Ethiopian children and children from the community. Although this difference was not significant, it indicated that these children had accomplished a natural integration into society, forming relationships based on common interests that did not necessarily include their Ethiopian identity.

- **Association mainly with children of Ethiopian origin:** In both groups a large number of children associated primarily with other children of Ethiopian origin, with no significant difference between the groups.

There are several possibilities for the children to associate mainly, or only, with members of their own community:

- the natural impulse to associate with the familiar and similar in terms of language, customs and ways of thinking;

- a dominance of Ethiopian identity in these children, which influences their choice of friends;

- non-integration into Israeli society, a sense of 'foreignness' and alienation;

- a sense of security within a group of friends from the Ethiopian community.

In summary, the findings do not show any significant pattern of association nor was any clear connection observed between the composition of the class (percentage of children of Ethiopian origin) and the patterns of association among the children. The researchers' conjecture is that the pattern of association was influenced by two factors: the child's personality (self-confidence, self-image, sociability and openness) and the composition of the class. In other words, in a class in which half the children are of Ethiopian origin, there will be children who will only associate with others from the community, some who will associate more with children who are not from the community, and others who will associate with both groups.

In Gimmel, there were no apparent differences between the groups in patterns of association with other children. In both groups, most of the children associated with children from the Ethiopian community as well as with non-Ethiopian children.

An additional important finding from the teacher interviews was taking pride in, and being sensitive about, being Ethiopian. These characteristics were found in both Parents Cooperative Kindergarten groups. One child was characterised as being very proud of his Ethiopian origin, participating in all the festivals and speaking of them with pride. Three children were characterised as being sensitive to their origin, sensing that they were treated differently because of it. When faced with insults on the subject, they were prone to emotional outbursts. These issues were not mentioned at all in either comparison group. It is difficult to interpret this finding either positively or negatively, although clearly, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more aware of the issue of belonging to the Ethiopian community.

Ability to express emotions

There were no descriptions of emotions in the teacher interviews in Gimmel. However, descriptions of the children's feelings were mentioned in the Shaul Hamelech interviews, but only in relation to Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children. The feelings were not always positive, but they were noticeable, which was not the case in the comparison group. In descriptions about seven of the children, the teachers felt that the children had a lack of *joie de vivre*, an inner sadness: *There's an inner sadness in the child that needs to be addressed. Charming eyes that speak sadness and unhappiness.* Three girls were characterised as being happy in life and smiling and dancing during recess.

It appeared that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech expressed their emotions to their teachers in a clear and noticeable manner, whereas the comparison group children were perceived more superficially by their teachers. Thus, four children who were described as emotionally unstable were also described in very general, vague terms: *Very introverted and quiet on one hand, with sudden outbursts of rage on the other. A confused little girl, unsettled, gives a misleading impression, serious one minute and changing the next, very prone to mood swings.*

The teachers were asked a direct question about violence. In Gimmel violence was rare in both groups. In Shaul Hamelech, the question was answered with a definite 'no' for most of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children. Violence was very infrequent and was usually verbal when it did occur. Only one child was described as physically violent. However, there was a larger number of children who exhibited violent behaviour in the Shaul Hamelech comparison group – cases of infrequent violence as well as a number of children who were described as problematic in terms of the violence they frequently displayed.

Differences between the neighbourhoods

In general, it can be said that there were two areas where differences between the two neighbourhoods recurred in the various interviews and questions. The first was the richness of the responses and the greater degree of creativeness or imagination found in Shaul Hamelech. The second was in the central focus addressed in the children's responses. In Gimmel, the focus was on the school, while in Shaul Hamelech, it was social – either the family, the Ethiopian community or making friends with peers.

The finding that in Shaul Hamelech there were children with more developed imaginations than in Gimmel, who expressed themselves more fully and richly, can be explained by the additional preparatory programmes these children enjoyed and still enjoy in the neighbourhood. ALMAYA works within the community and offers numerous programmes to older children as well the younger ones.

While the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in both neighbourhoods were described as more active than those from the comparison groups, it can be seen that in Gimmel, the children brought their initiative and activeness to school, which was the most significant place in their responses. We can surmise that the central focal point of the Gimmel children was the school because the children had no other rich social activities in any other framework, either in the neighbourhood or outside of school activities. Indeed, the only organised activity in which the Gimmel children participated was the preparatory study programme at the university. It is therefore clear that studies and school constituted a central part of their daily routine. Moreover, it is quite possible that in Gimmel, where there were fewer Ethiopian families and fewer programmes, the children had no strong sense of belonging and did not feel part of society, as they did in Shaul Hamelech.

In contrast, Shaul Hamelech is a place populated mainly by Ethiopian immigrants. The children there take part in activities organised by ALMAYA in the afternoons and generally feel that they are part of the community. For the children in our study, this intensive activity could have created a greater familiarity with their Ethiopian heritage, along with the story of their parents' immigration. Perhaps because of their awareness of the many difficulties in the history and reality of the Ethiopian immigrants, the Shaul Hamelech children understood the importance of the support and security offered by the family and the extended family, and were more sensitive to to social issues.

Chapter four

Conclusions

On the whole, the main areas in which differences were found between Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and the comparison groups were in the organisation of their activities and thinking, in their activeness and initiative, their perception of studies and school, the importance of home and family, sense of belonging to the Ethiopian community, ability to express emotion, and the nature of their social interactions. In analysing the responses, we examined the prevalence of parameters raised spontaneously by the children themselves or in response to guiding questions. As previously mentioned, some of the differences between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group and the comparison group were found in both neighbourhoods, and some were found in one neighbourhood only.

Organisation

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children have greater organising abilities than the comparison group children.

This statement is based on the children's descriptions of their activities, their ability to provide clear and comprehensive responses, on the teachers' descriptions of the children, and on their parents' aspirations for them.
This tendency for more organised thinking was evident in Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in both neighbourhoods. They gave more general descriptions about getting ready in the morning, rather than the detailed descriptions of each and every action provided by children in the comparison groups. They studied at home more than the comparison group children, both doing homework and preparing for tests, and perceived studying as an activity aimed at understanding the material or getting ahead with new material. In contrast, the comparison group children saw homework as an assignment to be carried out in passive obedience to the teacher.

To the questions about family and the story about the picture, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children provided richer and more comprehensive, story-like responses than the comparison group children. In addition, several Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children gave a title to the story they told about the picture. When Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children talked about family, they detailed the family structure and described each family member, compared to the comparison group children, who sometimes made no mention of their parents.

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents expressed more concrete and directed aspirations regarding their

Portrait of a child, photo: ALMAYA

children's future than the comparison group parents, who spoke in more general terms. The ability of the parents to describe a concrete objective indicates their ability to relate to the subject on a practical level and not only in terms of slogans. In the teacher interviews, the children's organisational abilities were evident in their understanding of the school framework and their integration into it.

More Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from both neighbourhoods were graded by their teachers as having high scholastic ability and average to high scholastic achievement. In Shaul Hamelech, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had a notably higher average for scholastic achievement than did the comparison group. In Gimmel, because of the small size of the samples, it was difficult to characterise one group in comparison to the other. However, it appeared that the scholastic abilities and achievements of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were marginally higher.

Activeness

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children are more active and show greater initiative than the comparison group children.

This greater activeness and ability to take initiative were revealed in the children's descriptions of their daily routine and in the character they created in the story they told. When asked about their daily routine, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in both neighbourhoods said that in the afternoons they played or participated in a variety of activities, while the comparison group children described 'hanging around' and passively spending time with their friends. In Gimmel, activeness was also evident in the children's descriptions of their activities at school. Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children described classes where they played an active and important role, corrected the teachers, and argued. This behaviour is more like accepted 'Israeli behaviour' and is not customary among Ethiopian immigrants, who are very polite and reserved.

The story the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children told about the picture was rich in practical content and the story's character took the initiative and was active. When the child described the character's social problems, she or he described an active conflict in which the character was an equal. The comparison group children described a situation of weakness in which the character was intimidated, helpless and exploited.

The parents of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children tended to assume greater responsibility for their children than the comparison group parents, displaying an active interest in their

children by ensuring that the child was at school, scrutinising the education the child was receiving and consulting with the school counsellor. Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents also tended to perceive their child as having an internal locus of control: *We trust him; he doesn't need to try very hard in order to succeed.*

Although there were children in both the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and comparison groups who were described as active in all spheres (in class, during recess, in organised activities, in social settings) and others who were described as passive, the comparison group was perceived as being more passive, and as having more children who were very passive in all spheres. The active children in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group were involved in class and in their social circle, showed initiative, were active and interested in what went on around them. They also organised parties and performed tasks well.

There were more children in the comparison group whose level of activeness was moderate compared to the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, and more children who were characterised as active during recess and passive in class, requiring more encouragement to be active.

It is interesting to note that there were more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children at both extremes: on the one hand, children who were very active in all spheres, both in class and socially, and on the other hand, children who displayed a moderate level of activity or who were passive in one sphere and active in another. However, the teachers' descriptions regarding the children's passivity in the comparison group were more extreme than their descriptions of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children.

With regard to social dominance, more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were described as socially dominant and as social leaders.

Active and initiative-taking behaviour was also evident in statements about the child's special talents or abilities. Although this question was not asked explicitly in the interview, the teachers spontaneously mentioned special abilities or a remarkable quality for the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, such as a talent for drawing and art, drama, music, sports, a remarkable sense of humour, or leadership qualities. No such outstanding qualities were mentioned in the comparison group, with the exception of three children who excelled in sports. This sheds a special light on the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group, in that the children expressed themselves creatively, were talented in specific fields, and found ways to channel and express their inner feelings.

Teachers also mentioned the expression of independent opinions on social issues by Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, such as participation in class debates. These children expressed their opinions independently, without fear of other children's reactions. This was not mentioned regarding even one of the comparison group children.

In general, the wealth of description in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group was greater and more diverse, and more content-related issues were raised in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten interviews than in the comparison group interviews. For example, the teachers stated more often that they had *no way of knowing* what the level of motivation was with regard to children from the comparison group. This difference may indicate that the presence of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children was more noticeable in the classroom and attracted the teacher's attention, positively or negatively. These children revealed more facets of themselves at school and in the classroom, expressed themselves in more spheres, were more active and tended to take initiatives.

School and studies

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children perceive school and the learning experience more positively than the comparison group children.

This is evident in the children's descriptions of their daily routines, their parents' attitude toward the subject of studies and their teachers' assessments of their scholastic abilities and achievements.

Two different attitudes toward school and studies could be seen. Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children studied independently at home and were motivated by their desire to get ahead with the material. Because of their ability to study alone, they were not intimidated by their studies and they perceived school as a place to meet friends, have a good time and play. In contrast, the comparison group children perceived school as *the place where one studies* and the purpose of studying at home was to obey the teachers and comply with school authorities. They did not have positive self-esteem or a sense of capability with regard to studying, and school was perceived as a dominant, or even threatening, place. Hence, they were less able to enjoy school and take advantage of being there to play and have a good time.

One recurring difference was conspicuous in its absence. When describing their daily routines, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children made less frequent mention than comparison group children of going to school and returning home from school, or of the fact that one studies at school. They did

not begin or end their daily routine at school, which many of the comparison group did. This was because school took up only part of the day, during which they also studied at home. Moreover, school held attractions other than studies for the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children, as shown by the fact that they provided more descriptions of playing at school than the comparison group children, and mentioned recesses as part of the school routine and activities.

A more positive attitude toward school was also apparent in the story about the picture that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from both neighbourhoods told. In Shaul Hamelech, the children stated that the character was happy to go to school. In Gimmel, this attitude was explicitly expressed in the question about daily routine, when the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children demonstrated a positive attitude toward school. Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from Gimmel also described greater positive self-esteem with regards to studying than the comparison group children did.

From the teacher interviews, there were differences not only in the children's perception of school and studies, but also in actual success in this area. More Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were graded by their teachers as having high scholastic ability and moderate to high scholastic achievement. According to the scholastic achievement scale, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had notably higher average scholastic achievement (Parents Cooperative Kindergarten: 3.12; comparison group: 2.6), and more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children had moderate to very high verbal abilities. More comparison group children were described as not expressing themselves verbally in class at all, and the teachers were therefore unable to grade them on this ability.

Another area that was examined was the children's effort and motivation to study as identified by the teachers. More Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in Shaul Hamelech were perceived as not showing an interest or investing any effort in their studies, not using their abilities to the full, and not being interested in getting help or getting ahead. It should be noted that this characteristic has no bearing on scholastic success, and it may well be that the teachers expected more from these children and were disappointed when they did not meet their full potential.

It was also stated more often that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children required additional support at school, such as personal attention, warmth and encouragement, reinforcement classes, a personal tutor, boarding school or a

smaller class. The interviewer gained a strong impression from the teachers that they sought help for these children and feared that their needs were not being addressed.

Home and family

Home and family are more significant to Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children than to comparison group children.

This is evident in the children's descriptions of their daily routines, references to family members in the story and descriptions of joint family activities at home. It is also evident in the responsibility assumed by the parents and their attitude toward the child's behaviour, and the parental influence and level of parental involvement in school mentioned by the teachers.

Most of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children indicated a perception of the home as a significant point of reference, a place they left and returned to before participating in other activities during the rest of the day. In Shaul Hamelech, more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children described helping at home during the day than did the comparison group children. When telling the story of the picture, they made more frequent references to the character's parents or family. In their responses to the follow-up question about what the family did together, they described more activities involving the family together at home. All of this combined to depict the home as the centre of joint activity for the entire family, who share the housework and have fun together.

There were no direct statements by parents about the importance of the home to their children, but it is possible to draw conclusions about the functioning of the home from two indirect findings in the interviews. One of these was associated with the responsibility assumed by Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents for their children. This might indicate that when parents have authority and feel responsible for their children, the child feels safe and protected within the family; hence, the child's perception of the family's importance increases.

A second finding was that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents referred less frequently than the comparison group parents to their children's behaviour. This difference appears to arise from the importance the parents attributed to the entire question of behaviour as comparison group parents perceive the child's behaviour as an important part of her or his description and personality. It appears that acceptance of the host society's norms is stronger among Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents (and

parents from Shaul Hamelech) than with comparison group parents (and parents from Gimmel). This finding refers to the adjustment of the entire family to Israeli society. The assumption is that when the child's adjustment to Israeli reality matches the family's adjustment, the child feels more comfortable at home, which enhances communication and partnership among family members.

In Shaul Hamelech, teachers were asked about their contact with parents. In response to this question, a higher percentage of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents were mentioned as being very involved in their children's schooling, or involved when necessary. The same differences were seen in Gimmel: more parents in the comparison group were characterised as having very poor contact with the teacher, not attending parent meetings at all, and not being well informed about their child's situation at school. In general, a greater number of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents were involved in their child's schooling, and a larger number of comparison group parents were uninvolved.

Sense of belonging to and contact with the community

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children have a stronger sense of belonging to the Ethiopian community than do comparison group children.

This finding was evident when the story about the picture related to the Ethiopian community, when the extended family was mentioned by the child as part of the family structure and when the children's association with members of the community was reported in the teacher interviews.

When telling the story of the picture, more Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children connected the story, in one way or another, to the Ethiopian community. The character was either from the community or the story took place in Ethiopia or something about the character reminded the child of a personal experience associated with Ethiopia.

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from Shaul Hamelech expressed a greater sense of belonging to the community in their responses to the question about family, by specifying uncles, grandparents, and even friends from the community in addition to their nuclear family.

The association of the children with members of the community was examined in the teacher interviews, and three patterns of association were found.

- A higher percentage of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children associated mainly with non-Ethiopian children, compared with the comparison group.

- A higher percentage of comparison group children tended to associate with both non-Ethiopian children and children from the community, indicating that these children had accomplished a natural integration into society, forming relationships based on common interests that did not necessarily include their Ethiopian identity.

- In both groups, a large number of children associated primarily with other children of Ethiopian origin, with no significant difference between the groups.

It is important to note that no clear connection was observed between the composition of the class (percentage of children of Ethiopian origin) and the patterns of association among the children. The researchers' conjecture is that the pattern of association is influenced by the interaction between the child's personality (self-confidence, self-image, sociability and openness) and the composition of the class.

An additional important finding from the teacher interviews was the idea of taking pride in, and being sensitive to, being Ethiopian. Neither of these issues was mentioned at all in regard to the comparison group but both were found in the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group. It is difficult to interpret this finding either positively or negatively, although clearly, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more aware of the issue of belonging to the Ethiopian community.

Ability to express emotions

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children demonstrate a greater ability to express emotions than comparison group children.

This characteristic was revealed by a different question in each of the neighbourhoods. In response to the question about the picture, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from Gimmel described the character experiencing a wider range of emotions than the comparison group children. In response to the question about the family, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children from Shaul Hamelech indicated a very wide range of emotions expressed within the family framework. This supported the reports by kindergarten teachers at the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten that they place special emphasis on emotional expression and verbal interpretation of children's behaviour that stems from a particular emotion.

In the teacher interviews, descriptions of the children's feelings did arise within accounts of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children. The feelings were not always positive, but they were

noticeable, which was not the case in the comparison group. It appeared that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children expressed their emotions to their teachers in a clear and noticeable manner, whereas the comparison group children were perceived more superficially by their teachers.

The teachers were asked whether there were problems with violence. This question was answered with a definite 'no' for most Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children. But there were a number of violent children mentioned in the comparison group – cases of infrequent violence as well as a number of children who were described as problematic in terms of the violence they frequently displayed.

Social interaction

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children have more positive social interactions than the comparison group children.

The difference in social interaction between Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children and the comparison group children was evident in the descriptions of the children's activities and those of the characters in their stories, as well as in their teachers' assessments of their social life.

With regard to school, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children found school much more enjoyable than did the comparison group children, who seemed to feel less capable scholastically. However, enjoying school was also linked to the enjoyment of the social interaction that takes place within this framework.

When asked about their daily routines, it appeared that Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were less satisfied with passive social interactions and more likely to initiate joint activities with other children of their age. In telling the story about the picture, Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children depicted the character as more active and in control of the interaction than the comparison group children.

When the teachers were asked about the children's social dominance, it was found that a similar percentage of children in both groups were socially well integrated, well liked and popular. However, it should be noted that there were more socially dominant children and leaders in the Shaul Hamelech Parents Cooperative Kindergarten group than in the comparison group, and there were differences with regard to problems of violence.

The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten Children

It is evident from the information presented here that the children in our

study who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten are different from other children of Ethiopian origin of their age. This is evident in the interviews with their parents and teachers and in their own responses in the interviews. The question of what sets the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children apart can be answered on several levels.

- The first level is what we have discussed thus far – the visible differences, the behaviour and values that could be measured by the instruments we used in collecting data for this study.

- The second level is the unification of these elements in the areas of social representations, self-perception and perception of society.

- The third level is the reasons these children are different – what has caused them to be different? What is it about the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten that contributed to these differences? And how can the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten continue to function in a way that will help children who have attended it, or will attend it, become less marginal and better integrated into Israeli society?

The various elements that contribute to the differences we have seen in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children revolve around three axes. The central one is the individuality/community axis. The second is parental-authority/children's-responsibility, which involves the changes that have taken place in the parents as well as the children because of their experience in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten. The last axis derives from the first two and focuses on the question of how and to what extent can children be provided with the motivation to use the tools they acquire in the kindergarten to their greatest advantage?

Individuality/Community

The Ethiopian and Israeli cultures have very different perceptions of human beings and their function in society. In Ethiopian society, the human being is a member of a group which is bound by a communal-traditional culture that reinforces 'togetherness' and does not encourage individuality. Despite the changes that have taken place in their society since the community migrated to Israel – primarily the break-up of the community structure and the extended family – the underlying forces that preserve the cohesiveness and structure of the community are still very strong.

Although Israeli society is extremely varied and is made up of different communities, the dominant trait is one of individualism, a perception that

supports the development of the individual in the direction of maximum self-actualisation.

Unlike other children of Ethiopian origin of their age, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children we studied displayed a distinct sense of self and a clear tendency toward individualism. The children perceived themselves as independent entities, and this perception was evident in a higher awareness of themselves, their ability to express emotions or a need for help, and their ability to develop hobbies and talents that were theirs alone. The people around them reacted accordingly. The teachers of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children viewed these children more clearly and less superficially than their peers. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were perceived as more dominant – children whose needs were clear – and there was a greater tendency to recommend them for, and integrate them into, the support programmes they needed.

Generally, Ethiopian parents tend to refer to their children as one entity – *them* – without relating to each child individually. A notable finding was that in addition to the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children showing a distinct sense of individuality, their parents, too, saw them as individuals, identifying unique elements in them, such as hobbies or ambitions for the future. These parents also seemed to perceive their children as being more responsible and delegated responsibility to them for performing tasks at home.

These differences should not be seen as a dichotomous division between the individual and the community, but rather as a shift in this axis. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were still less individualistic than Israeli children of the same age who are not of Ethiopian origin (and are not caught between two cultures) or immigrant children from the former Soviet Union who came from a society that is more similar to the host Israeli society from the standpoint of self-perception and individualism.

At the same time, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children seemed to feel that they belonged to the Ethiopian community. They neither denied nor 'forgot to mention' their connection with the community, apparently seeing themselves as part of a large, supportive body, which for them constituted a kind of family. This could also mean that the content of their Ethiopian tradition and heritage was far more accessible to them.

What was it in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten that caused these differences in the children's self-perception? A look at the aims of Parents Cooperative Kindergarten activities shows that in order to develop the child's

discrete sense of self, the programme's creators seek to give the children the ability to express emotions and needs, and to develop a sense of independence and freedom of choice. Interviews with the founders of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and those who are involved in its work reveal a concrete picture of the application of these aims in the kindergarten.

- **Emotional expression:** In interviews with the programme's coordinators and teachers, they said that as part of their work in the kindergarten, they address emotions and provide warmth, but above all, they work with the children on identifying and coping with their emotions. This is done, for example, by transparently saying to the child, *You're angry because Danny took the toy.* or *You're sad because your mommy hasn't come yet.*

- **Freedom of choice:** One of the interviewees reported that, *in every activity in the kindergarten, the child has a choice.* The activities are structured and organised, but at the same time, the children are given freedom of choice. At the meal, the children have a choice of what they want to eat (rice or potatoes). The teachers have to build structured activities with a beginning, a middle and an end, but the children are never obliged to take part in the activity. They can choose whether they want to take part in a creative activity or play, for example, in the dolls' corner. It is important to note that the programme supervisors describe intensive work with the counsellors (women of Ethiopian origin trained for work in the kindergarten) on this issue: not to force the children to do something simply because the group has a planned activity. This underscores the gap in the perception of a group acting together, even in kindergarten, where the individual does not have the ability to choose, in contrast to the Israeli reality for which the children are being prepared.

In the preschool, the counsellors talk to the mothers about their child's experience in kindergarten activities, emphasising each child's unique character. The children are given more attention and the parents see the results of this later at home. Interviews with Parents Cooperative Kindergarten teachers and coordinators showed that the parents recognise the uniqueness of children who have participated in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten. The parents say that the kindergarten child is more developed than their other children, brings home paintings and drawings, and sings songs learned in school. Sometimes the mother comes home from the kindergarten with her own impressions and shared experiences with her child, and this also sets the child

apart in her view. The children's ability to develop a distinct perception of self is the result of a combination of two factors: the child's own experience in the kindergarten (designed to develop self-perception) and the parents learning to see the child's uniqueness, which enhances the process.

Parental authority/children's responsibility

When examining immigrant groups in a strange country, we frequently encounter a weakening of parental authority. Integration is easier for children, who are quicker to feel they belong in the host society, while the parents are slower to adapt – they feel powerless, like square pegs in round holes. In the wave of immigration from Ethiopia in particular, many parents experienced feelings of helplessness in the face of a system that was educating and raising their children in a way that was totally alien to what they had known. The educational tools they had employed in Ethiopia, such as physical punishment, were not received with understanding in Israel. The accepted education system in Israel was not (and still is not) familiar to them. In addition, most of the immigrant parents are illiterate in their native Ethiopian languages and have limited skills in Hebrew.

In Ethiopia, the parents had no exposure to preschools and minimal, if any, exposure to elementary schools. Because the schools were often so far from where they lived, the children stayed at school during the week, and the teacher had complete authority over everything. In Israel from 1984 to the mid-1990s, children of Ethiopian origin were all sent to boarding schools from age 11 to 18. Although this policy had changed by the time the children we studied had reached that age, it nevertheless sent a clear message to parents, reinforcing their experience with schools in Ethiopia: that parents were not responsible for their children's education. The parents felt that their parental authority had been expropriated. They felt powerless and were afraid of what they saw as intervention through a formal framework, accompanied by unfamiliar rules, police charges, and so on. As a result, many parents reacted by completely relinquishing parental authority and shrugging off their parental responsibility for their children.

This situation also had to be dealt with in the framework of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten. Parents asked the programme's coordinators to use strict discipline, with strict rules, and even to use physical punishment. This, of course, was not acceptable to the coordinators of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, and this was made clear to the parents. The document containing the aims of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten states the following: *Self-image: reinforcing the parents' confidence*

and providing them with legitimacy regarding their ability to educate their children (Degani-Zemel et al. 1997). In meeting this important objective, work was carried out with the parents through talks in which the responsibility of parents for their children was emphasised and the programme was explained, with information provided on activities, content and organisation. In addition, a message was conveyed to the parents that they should not give in to the child and 'waive their authority', they could formulate less rigid and restrictive rules instead. Changes in the parents' attitudes were made not only through talk but also through negotiations on the kindergarten's activities.

Part of adapting to any kind of learning framework involves flexibility. This is what was required of the mothers concerning the rules and activities of the kindergarten – allowing the children to get their clothes dirty at school, for example. The most important factor in this process is embodied in the kindergarten's official name – the Parents Cooperative Preschool – and the principle guiding its operation: parent participation in activities. The parents are urged to come to the kindergarten and take part in the activities. They are not forced to participate if they seem too threatened by the activities, but even the most shy and most reluctant parents see the kindergarten and the counsellors twice a day. In the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, the parents thus witnessed and often participated in an alternative way of shaping their children's behaviour. They saw children who were relaxed and calm and who acted freely, without the teachers losing their authority. Thus, through 'modelling' by the teachers, the parents themselves become more relaxed and surer of their authority and their ability to educate their children in the Israeli reality.

In the educational framework of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten, the parents also learned the daily routine, the requirements, and the content. Thus, when their children went to a pre-compulsory or compulsory kindergarten, the parents knew what to expect and how to function as parents within that framework. The teachers we interviewed also described greater involvement in the school by the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents, compared with the comparison group parents. This involvement was certainly learned in part within the framework of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten.

Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents referred less often to their children's behaviour in the interviews. It may be that they had learned that behaviour was not something against which children should be measured, nor was there a need to adhere to strict rules. Moreover, it can be seen that these parents felt greater responsibility toward

their children and their children's future, and they could define more precisely what their aspirations were for the child's future.

The other side of the coin is the children's responsibilities. At first glance, we might expect that when parents assume responsibility for their children, the children will be childish and less mature and responsible. However, we learned from the interviews that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children perceived themselves and were perceived by their parents as more mature than the children of the comparison group. This was demonstrated in a number of ways. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children helped out with household chores, they initiated and were more active in relation to their environment, and among them there were more children perceived as social leaders than in the comparison group. It is possible that the parents' greater confidence in their ability to educate and to provide for their children enabled them to give their children room for independence and responsibility, which the children took on and developed into a more adult and responsible behaviour pattern.

It is also possible that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents measured their children's adulthood and maturity differently than the parents in the comparison group, perhaps because they saw their child as an individual with specific abilities and not as part of a group of children where behaviour would be seen only as good or bad. While we do not have sufficient data to prove this assumption, we are witness to the emphasis placed by the comparison group parents on good behaviour.

Tools/motivation

In the chapter describing the aims of the Parents Cooperative Preschool in the evaluation report (Degani-Zemel et al. 1997), the provision of tools is given a central place: development of linguistic skills, motor skills, ability to form abstract thought, fluency of expression, social adaptation, and so forth. The tracer study shows without a doubt that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children are today equipped with a greater number of tools than their comparison group counterparts. Their thinking is organised, they know how to plan time and study independently, and their scholastic achievements are higher than those of the comparison group. In addition, they are able to express a greater range of emotions; they know how to express their needs better and thus to obtain help and support. Furthermore, from the standpoint of social interactions, there are a greater number of dominant children among the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children. These findings show that the aims of the Parents Cooperative

Kindergarten have been attained: the children have come away with a range of tools that will help them to fit into Israeli society, without losing their sense of belonging and pride in their origins.

It is possible, however, that providing tools is not sufficient to ensure that the children will be more fully integrated into the host society. In the teacher interviews, it was claimed that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were less motivated scholastically than the comparison group. We explained this finding as being caused by the teachers' higher expectations of these children (who have higher scholastic achievement and better scholastic ability). However, it is clear that these children do not show sufficient motivation to satisfy their teachers. Also, from a comparison with the Arad Group interviewees, it can be seen that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children participated less in extracurricular activities that were likely to personally interest and advance them. This was mainly because of economic circumstances but could also indicate that these children attached less importance to advancement or 'self-actualisation'. (It is important to note that in Beer-Sheva there are several organisations, including ALMAYA, that subsidise or provide activities of this kind at no charge for children of Ethiopian origin, particularly in Shaul Hamelech. Scholarships for special activities are also available, especially for children of Ethiopian origin.)

However, based on their own responses, the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children were more active and showed more initiative than the comparison group, both in the scholastic framework and with regard to friends and their leisure-time activities. That being so, we can perhaps conclude that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children showed greater motivation only in familiar situations (school, family and spending time with their friends in the afternoon); the majority still did not dare to break out of the confines of the familiar to pursue hobbies or special talents.

This study did not examine the interviewees' perceptions of the future, nor did it contain any indication of this, except for the parents' perceptions of their children's future. The vision of the future of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children was clearer to their parents than was that of the comparison group children. The Parents Cooperative Kindergarten parents talked about the future in concrete terms, not in slogans.

Conclusion

Based on our study, we can confidently state that participation in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten has a long-

term effect on the lives of both children and parents. There are clear differences between children who attended the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and those in the same neighbourhood and from the same background who did not. Our study has shown that these differences run through parents' and teachers' perceptions of these children, as well as the children's perceptions of themselves and their place in the community, their scholastic performance, and their attitude towards family and school.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from this study, however, is that the effect of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten experience seems to be reinforced if the children take part in additional programmes at a later age. While the differences we found between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten and the comparison group children were striking, there were also thought-provoking differences found between the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten children in the two neighbourhoods. The very small size of the sample from Gimmel makes it difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions, but it may be possible to explain these differences in part by the fact that in Shaul Hamelech, there are on-going programmes for different age groups provided by a number of organisations, including ALMAYA. This is not the case in Gimmel.

The framework of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten programme provides support for parents and children alike. The programme's aims include a sincere desire to advance the children and their families, and the children only have to internalise and use the tools they are given. But motivation comes from inside, and in the 'real world', it is unreasonable to expect that anyone will continue to encourage the children and their success. What is required is an inner motivating force, and we feel that the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten programme has helped provide this by shaping and strengthening the children's ambitions for themselves, their future and their self-realisation.

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Playing with building blocks, photo: ALMAYA

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Moving from one country to another, even voluntarily, has consequences for the newcomers and the hosts. The background to this report is the transition of an entire community of Africans from a tribal culture to a modern Western society. This was the Jewish community of Ethiopia who moved to Israel between 1977 and 1991, meeting hardships, hunger, epidemics and death on the way. On arrival, they found that they were expected to adjust to a society and way of life that was entirely different from anything that they had previously experienced.

In the town of Beer-Sheva, where many of the new arrivals settled, various programmes sprang up to assist the new arrivals. This report traces the progress of one of these – the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten that worked with young children and parents.

Ten years on, the results are quite striking. There can be no doubt that participation in the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten had a profound influence on the lives of the 36 children who were traced. The former programme children have acquired a range of tools that are helping them to fit better into Israeli society. They have a distinct sense of self and can be said to have shifted along the axis from community towards individualism.

The mothers who participated in the Kindergarten gained insights into the Israeli education system and its approach to organisation and schedules; they learned different methods of disciplining their children; they saw that children may make individual choices without disrupting the entire group. This appears to have positively affected the adjustment of whole families to their new society.

Overall, we can say that children and parents who were part of the Parents Cooperative Kindergarten are not just living within Israeli society, they have a real sense of belonging to it.

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